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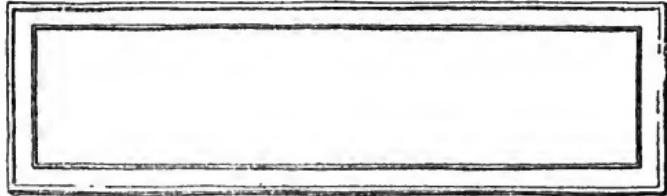


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ARGENTINE, PATAGONIAN,

AND

CHILIAN SKETCHES,

WITH A FEW NOTES ON URUGUAY.

BY

C. E. AKERS.

11

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PREFACE.

THE subject matter of these sketches was collected during a residence of two years in South America as the Special Correspondent of *The Standard*. It is with the kind permission of the Editor of that journal that I am able to make use of portions of articles published during 1891-2.

C. E. AKERS.

14, ARLINGTON STREET,

February, 1893.

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I.

THE ARGENTINE POSITION.

THE common remark that Argentina is a country of great natural riches is, no doubt, quite true. Unquestionably it is so in pastoral wealth and in lands well suited to agriculture—one might also truthfully add that for concession mongering and jobbery during the last few years it has had no rival. But the majority of people, more especially foreigners, who have no personal knowledge of the Argentine Republic, and those who only visit the City of Buenos Aires, or certain well-known centres, do not grasp the real position. There is no such thing as an Argentine nation. True, there is a so-called National Government, and it is established under an elaborate and intricate written Constitution. In reality, however, it has very limited power over the fourteen Provinces that profess to recognise it as the head of the Republic. In matters of taxation and internal economy the Provincial Governments know not the National Authority. Even at La Plata, the seat of the Government at Buenos Aires, which is only two hours distant by train from the Federal capital, the Provincial authorities work in an entirely independent manner, and practically defy the Federal

Government to dictate any measures that may not coincide with the views of the Governor and officials of the Province.

Time will, of course, work many changes in respect to the relations of the Provinces towards the Central Government; but it is necessary to look the situation squarely in the face as it actually stands to-day. The Provinces are nothing more or less than independent States. Each has its own administrative machinery, its own Chambers of Senators and Deputies, and a complete staff for each Governmental department. Every Province has bodies of troops—they may be called National Guard or police—but none the less they are armed soldiers sustained by the Provincial authorities, nominally to preserve internal order, in reality as a menace to the National Government, to show that no kind of interference with or infringement of Provincial rights will be tolerated. The Provinces are jealous of one another, and equally so of the exercise of any power over them by the Federal head. They know that the establishment of a homogeneous Government throughout the wide area now known as Argentina would deprive them, to a very great extent, of access to the sources of patronage and jobbery that now allow hosts of officials to live a life of idleness and extravagance. The railway communication which has already been established throughout many sections of the country must naturally tend towards removing many of the prejudices and insulated ideas that existed a very few years ago, when a journey that can now be

accomplished in twenty-four hours occupied as many days. But not until the educational system of Argentina is developed far beyond its present limits is it possible that any general assimilation of manners and character will be reached. The example of Spain is of primary importance as a comparison on which to base an opinion. That country, with many greater advantages than Argentina possesses, is still only in the infancy of its civilisation as a combined whole. The South looks upon the North in the light of a foreign country. So it is in Argentina. The country consists of a series of disintegrated portions, and at any moment the whole fabric is liable to become embroiled in disputes caused by Provincial factions.

The present jealousy of the Provincial Governments towards the National Centre is the result of prejudice born of ignorance accentuated by personal consideration for place and power: the only feasible means of eliminating this great source of impediment to progress is by introducing a system of education that will be liberal and wide-spread in results, solid and deep-rooted in effect. That this need is not unrecognised is shown by the fact that at the opening of Congress, in May last, President Pellegrini laid stress on the fact that want of education was one of the great evils that the country was suffering from at the present time. The Chief Magistrate was undoubtedly right. But the statistics furnished by the Department of Education show that new facilities are not wanted so much as a proper system. At the close

of the year 1891 there were 2,441 Government schools in existence. The staff of teachers of both sexes numbered 5,856, and the names of pupils inscribed on the registers reached a total of 209,428. Attendance at school is compulsory for all children under 14 years of age. In addition to the Government institutions there existed on January 1st, 1892, 754 private schools, with 2,051 teachers and 48,200 pupils. The cost to the Government of maintaining the public schools was 8,456,104 dols. (currency) annually.

The instruction imparted comprises a very wide range of subjects from the first elements to the higher branches of classics and science; but very little method is shown in the teaching. Moreover, discipline, according to European ideas, is entirely absent. This fact is acknowledged by the Argentines themselves; but they do not or will not bring about a movement to establish over their children the strict disciplinary rules that are so necessary to enforce if obedience is to be inculcated in young minds. The result obtained from the system now in vogue is of a most superficial nature; it is the rough article covered over with a thin veneer. Even the natives themselves are aware of the defect, and on one occasion an Argentine remarked that his countrymen far too closely resembled the River Plate—"they had too much surface and too little depth." That the existing system of education appertains too much to paper and too little to practice I had an illustration in Entre Ríos. At an important school in that province was a selection of really fine

models and instruments of all kinds for demonstrating the use of steam and electricity. I found them stowed away in a cellar, and in answer to my enquiry, was told that none of the professors or masters understood the use of them.

As an example of how ignorant the bulk of the population is of the political rights conceded by the constitution, even in the more advanced centre of Buenos Aires, it is only necessary to attend a polling station on the day of an election.

It is a curious fact, and one worthy of record, that on February 7th, 1892, at the elections for members of Congress, the votes polled in the city of Buenos Aires amounted to under seven thousand, and on that occasion the polling stations were crowded by both of the political Parties; whereas, on April 12th, when only the official Party voted, the published records give the number of votes polled as being over nine thousand. I visited nearly half the number of the stations during the day, and it was a rare thing to find more than one or two persons assembled there for the purpose of voting, while in the vicinity were groups of police armed with rifles and revolvers, and even on the roofs of houses armed pickets were stationed.

In Argentina the internal progress and the development of the resources of the country must be intimately connected with the political situation for many years to come. It is true that the Articles of the Constitution promise fair conditions under which to live; but, unfortunately, the self-same Constitution, in the hands of un-

scrupulous administrators, becomes so elastic as to be practically a dead letter. Foreign capital is a necessity, and foreign immigration an absolute need, if the exports are to show any substantial increase in the near future. Under the existing conditions there is not, in reality, any security for the former, and without capital there can be no inducement for the latter. Laws are made from day to day by the authorities without, apparently, any due consideration of what the effect may be on vested interests. As examples of this state of things, it is only necessary to look at the recent legislation with regard to railways, or to examine the way the currency has been dealt with during the last two years. In most countries public opinion is strong enough to prevent the spirit of the Constitution being constantly overridden ; here, in Argentina, public opinion can hardly be said to exist, and any attempt at an expression of such is promptly construed into an endeavour to formulate a treasonable conspiracy against the Government.

The forcible suppression of public opinion constitutes one of the worst features in the Government of Argentina. So long as free expression and discussion are denied to the people there must remain the fear of revolutionary outbreaks. Such a method appeals to the public as the only means of making the feeling of the hour known ; and herein lies a real danger for the country. A native remarked to me a few days since "that Revolution was in the blood of every Argentine, and that it was the natural means to gain a desired end." This observation is entirely

sophistical; but, on the other hand, it is undoubtedly true that every popular movement in the past has been accompanied by outbreaks of armed force. It is no matter for wonder that this should be so, under the existing conditions, which allow the Government, whenever the Opposition becomes formidable, to declare a state of siege, and suspend all civil rights of the citizen. In a recent instance every newspaper that did not support the policy of the Executive was suppressed ; every meeting place where the Opposition was organising its members for the Presidential Election was broken into, the work stopped, and the place guarded by police ; and, lastly, the European Cable Company was ordered not to transmit any telegrams, as some had been sent that had created an unfavourable impression in Europe.

The present Constitution of Argentina is applied to a people who are not capable of appreciating it. They are not sufficiently developed as a nation to make the most of its benefits, and can only see in it the opportunity it offers for evil. To them a strong Government simply means a ruling power that is never afraid to use force to accomplish any end in view. If such a Government could be instituted in Buenos Aires at the present moment, and would be just to foreign interests, it would be far from being an unmitigated evil for Argentina ; and if at the same time it would carry out a vigorous educational policy, an immense benefit would be conferred upon the people.

So long as each province continues to be semi-independent, as at present, there must always be a difficulty in

obtaining the complete recognition of the national power. Once the internal control of the whole is vested in the Federal Government this resistance to authority must disappear. It is with this end in view that the political question for some years to come must be regarded.

The first step towards complete unity is the abolition of the Provincial State Banks, and the setting up in their place of one powerful institution, competently administered, and with branches extending over the whole of the Republic. Political agitation requires the solid backing of money to make it successful. With the abolition of the State Banks in the provinces, the existing source of supply for this purpose will cease. Once this reform is accomplished, it will be possible to move further, and abolish the semi-independent Governments of each province. In place of these, a Governor and Local Council, responsible only to the National centre, might be put in power. It is by such radical changes alone that the component parts of Argentina can be welded together into any semblance of a nation.

A very strong party exists to-day in Buenos Aires in favour of the establishment of unitarian Government in place of the present Federal system. The supporters of this policy are, as a rule, men of wealth and standing in the Province of Buenos Aires, but they are outnumbered in Congress by the various provincial representatives. The feeling in favour of such a change is growing stronger, and with the spread of education it will certainly increase.

The best example that has occurred in recent years of the rottenness and corruption to which the existing system of government lends itself is the *exposé* that has taken place in the Province of Cordoba. When Dr. Pizarro was elected in March last to the post of Governor of Cordoba, he ordered the Accountant-General, Senor Thiriot, to draw up an exact financial statement showing the position of the Province and the manner in which the finances had been administered during the past Administration. Senor Thiriot states:—

"In the estimates for 1891, which have also been adopted for the current year, appears a sum of \$625,533 as surplus of the revenue over expenditure. The total revenue is placed at \$4,398,953, and the expenditure at \$3,773,420. In place of any surplus, each year has brought deficits of two to two and a half millions. The revenue from the Provincial Bank is put down at \$2,500,000, whereas it was perfectly well known at the time the estimates were made up that the Bank was in a bankrupt state, and could give no profits either in 1891 or 1892. According to the returns of the debts of the Province, it is found that they amount to the fabulous sum of \$122,228,594. The Gold Debt alone, converted into currency at 250 per cent. premium, amounts to \$87,559,790. The Floating Debt is \$2,100,000, and the amount due to the National Provincial and the National Mortgage Banks is \$32,568,804.

"The statistics referring to the hospital and penitentiary are edifying."

They show payments—

1889. Plans of the hospital...	...	\$3,000
1890. Cash on account	350,000
1889. For the penitentiary...	...	362,460.29
1890. " " "	...	269,410.44
To Luis Stremitz	113,227.74
		<hr/>
		\$1,098,098.47
		<hr/>

"The hospital does not exist, and to rescind the contract for building it compensation has been given to the contractors to the extent of \$431,750.

The statistics showing the actual financial position of the Province, as regards the sum needed yearly for the administration and service on the Debt, are as follows:—

Eight per Cent. Amortisation and

interest \$9,778,287

Administration 1,488,660

Guarantee on Cruz del Eje Railway 1,153,467

Annual expenditure \$12,420,414

Annual revenue 1,419,277.

Yearly deficit \$11,001,137"

Senor Thiriot cites many other instances of the corruption and jobbery that he found in the various Departments, but sufficient has been quoted to show how

absolutely rotten the Administration under the existing system is.

It is quite true amongst the provincial representatives that many honourable men are to be found who would like to see their country consolidated, and the interest paid on the obligations that have been contracted. But it requires so violent an effort to alter the course which successive Governments have drifted into that the prospect is very far from encouraging. It may be that through some method of tinkering and patching, in which the Governments will probably be assisted by friends abroad, some show of making payments may be attempted. But advantage will be taken of any arrangement which allows the power of borrowing to be exercised in the immediate future, and in the end creditors will have to be content to hear the time-worn formula that "half a loaf is better than no bread," and to accept first one reduction and probably another afterwards and so on until nothing at all is forthcoming. So long as the present constitution continues in force it is clear that the National Government cannot assume these provincial liabilities.

II.

THE COMMERCIAL OUTLOOK.

FROM a purely commercial point of view—that is to say, in actual trading—the situation in Buenos Aires shows a distinct improvement over 1891. It is only natural that such should be the case. The acute stage of the liquidation is now over, and business men are no longer living in a harassed and wearied state of anxiety with regard to impending failures. Certain large and heavily involved firms are still, of course, in a more or less precarious position. The losses have been enormous; people who a few years ago were in positions of affluence and wealth are now, in very many instances, reduced to absolute poverty. That, however, must be regarded as the natural sequence of events after a period of undue inflation and madly reckless speculation. It is not too much to say that the majority of the inhabitants are worse off to-day than before the epoch of “boom” made them lose all power of restraint over their judgments, and killed, for the time being, every particle of common-sense they possessed. Even the ex-President, Juarez Celman, who was credited with having amassed a fortune of thirty millions of dollars, has come down to dragging out an

existence in the country, with one servant to attend to the wants of himself and his family, though report credits him with the possession of large sums in cash safely deposited in Europe.

This state of affairs is distinctly more for the general good of the country, notwithstanding the fact that individual interests may find such stern reality a most unpleasant condition to face. As a result of it, speculation of any kind is almost an unknown quantity at the present moment in any branch of business. Those who would like to speculate have no money to indulge their inclinations, and those who have money are now extremely cautious in their manner of dealing with it. Even in the buying and selling of gold, which has always been the chief gambling counter of late years on the Buenos Aires Stock Exchange, there has hardly been an attempt at any large speculative movement for some months past. This is proved by the fact that political disturbances to-day have scarcely any perceptible effect on the premium. To-day the Gold Ring practically confines its business operations to the legitimate needs of supply and demand. It is necessary that so much should be sold in order that the produce of the country should be paid for, and that amount is absorbed by importers and foreign companies, who must buy to make their European remittances.

- The almost total subsidence of the speculative element has produced a marked change in the general aspect of Buenos Aires. Fully one-fifth of the population that ↘

existed in the city three years ago has disappeared. A large proportion of this number has drifted out into the country, where the conditions of life are easy, and the struggle for existence a comparatively light one ; of the remainder, some have returned to their homes in Europe, and others have gone to Brazil or Chili^o, or, indeed, anywhere that offered a prospect of immediate employment. The loafers and idlers who flocked into Buenos Aires at the time of the "boom," and, vulture-like, hovered about, waiting for prey, are now seldom seen. Hard times have, of course, brought with them much poverty and no small amount of real distress, but it is less palpable to-day than it was a year ago. The population of four hundred and fifty thousand souls that now go to make up the city proper is still far in excess of the number that is required to meet the exigencies of the labour market. If the value of the total exports reaches fifteen million pounds it is as much as can be reasonably expected during the present year. Allow that the imports amount to a similar figure, and then even the most sanguine person must admit that there is no *raison d'être* for a city of such proportions, the more especially as part of the trade passes direct to Rosario and Bahia Blanca. In time, as the development of the country proceeds, this anomaly will regulate itself, but in the intervening years some very bitter experiences must of necessity be undergone.

The most healthy indication, so far as general commercial business is concerned, is that, in spite of the fact that long credits of any kind are now practically unknown,

the importers of necessary articles are doing a fair trade. That this should be conducted on almost a cash basis is not a matter for regret. Long credits were one of the curses that this country has suffered from during the past few years, and they have been the cause of making the present era of liquidation such a difficult period. The bulk of the bad debts that accrued from that system are already discounted ; it is private individuals, and not general trade, that will suffer from the disclosure of losses that still remain to be revealed.

The change that has come over the spirit of the times is exemplified by the following incident that occurred a short time since. During Carnival it has always been the custom to illuminate the principal thoroughfares with arcs of gas lamps thrown from side to side of the streets. As usual, this year the Gas Companies were requested to make the necessary arrangements to get this done. They replied that if they were paid in advance for the illuminations the request would be complied with, but on no other conditions would they assist in the matter. The poverty-stricken appearance of the City is in strange contrast to the lavish expenditure that characterised it three years ago. Unfinished buildings and public works are seen everywhere ; the pavements of the streets are gradually breaking up, and scarcely any attempt is made to repair the damage—altogether a look of general dilapidation. There is one stereotyped answer to any question as to why this is : the Municipality have no money, or this or that Company has been ruined by the crisis. The natural

deduction is that such experiences should teach the Argentines a lesson in the practical advantages of economy and thrift, words that have never been understood in this country. If the present hard times instruct the people in the real meaning of those two words, the crisis will not have been an unmitigated evil for the Argentines and Argentina.

If the country remains free from internal troubles and is administered on a fairly honest financial basis there is no reason why substantial development of the pastoral and agricultural resources should not take place. What it has to fear are the brilliant financial schemes that are continually formulated to allow it to assume immediately a solvent position. Every such measure must largely affect the interests of foreign creditors, and, unfortunately, the spirit of the times does not appear to be in favour of passing any legislation that would advance their claims for a fair and equitable adjustment of the obligations that Argentina has incurred in the past. Indeed, there are too many persons in this country who regard the Foreign Debt in the light of the idea contained in the fragment of "Sartor Resartus" which says, "Make this nation toil for us, bleed for us, hunger and sorrow and sin for us, and they do it." More especially has this train of thought been expressed with regard to England, and the result of it is summed up in the words "reduction or suspension of payments" as a panacea for the present evils. The apathy that the foreign creditors have shown up to now must, therefore, be put on one side, and energetic action be

taken to prevent matters drifting into such a state as to make so disastrous an outcome even a possibility.

When the subscription lists for the first ten million dollars of the Bank of the Argentine Nation were opened only some five millions were subscribed, and these were simply exchanges of Bonds of the Internal Loan. The meaning of this is plain, and shows that the public had no faith in the concern. The Bank therefore ended in becoming a State institution, based on emissions of paper money, and it will fall into precisely the same groove as the defunct National Bank. Once more the old Spanish proverb was illustrated, "*Los mismos frailes con otras alforjas.*"

Only a few days ago I was talking to a resident of Buenos Aires whose father settled in the country in the year 1813. My acquaintance then began to recall old memories in connection with the country. He said that when Rosas first came in as Dictator the cry of the people was that they would now have peace and quietude ; that the actual result was that every Argentine for years was forced to wear a red band round his hat and a ribbon in his button-hole with the words "*Viva los Federales ; Muera los Unitarios*" printed upon them. It was a reign of terror, and Rosas, in order to maintain his power, was forced to allow the Provincial Governments to follow their own sweet will in everything. Events overthrew the Dictator, and when Mitre succeeded to power, after the battle of Pavon, people again said that now good government would be obtained. Time showed that the Government only

existed on sufferance, and in continual conflict with the various Provincial Administrations. Each succeeding revolution and the advent of a fresh Administration were invariably accompanied with the exclamations of the hopeful that now the change for the better had come. So it was with Avalleneda, with Roca, with Pellegrini in July of 1890, and so it is to-day with the expected reign of Dr. Luis Saenz Peña. Always in the past the country has had to suffer bitter disappointment, and, while hoping for a very different fate for our present expectations, it is impossible to help a feeling of uneasiness and doubt. I am only repeating almost the exact words of an intelligent man who was born in the Argentine Republic, and who has lived all his life in it, watching and weighing occurrences as they passed by him, and therefore his opinion is worthy of some consideration from those whose interests lie here.

It matters little that people say that European capitalists will not lend more money to this Republic. Such warnings are mere idle talk, and have been uttered often before. Look back at the past, and see with what plausible ingenuity Argentina has covered up former shortcomings, and obtained unlimited loans and credits. An excuse like that made in 1874 with regard to the lack of accommodation for shipping in the Riochuelo was sufficient to loosen the purse-strings of the London banker. Then railways were so necessary to develop the pastoral and agricultural resources of the country ; more loans were obtained, the railways were built and then sold, and the

money for them has—well, disappeared. The crowning *coup d'état* was in connection with the establishment of the provincial banks; how was it possible to carry on the business requirements of the Republic without banking facilities? London swallowed the bait, with the result that once more the ingenuity of the Argentine triumphed. And so it will be in the years that follow. Possibly the interest on the External Debt will be allowed to drop into arrear for a few years. For purposes of expediency it will then be paid for a little while, and, whilst the glamour of the resumption of payment is still effective, the opportunity will be seized upon to incur fresh obligations on some plausible and ingenious excuse. As in the past, the money will be advanced nominally for some distinct purpose; but the plea on which it is obtained will probably be of such a nature as to preclude any necessity for a careful investigation into the actual resources of the country or the true needs of the inhabitants. The Argentine loves to deal in generalities, and to enter into detail, especially in such a matter as the raising of a loan, would be distinctly distasteful, and every effort would be made to avoid incurring such, to him, unnecessary annoyance and trouble.

III.

THE CITY OF BUENOS AIRES.

FOR years past the Municipality of Buenos Aires has been in a continual state of financial difficulty. Of late it has drifted into a condition of hopeless insolvency. It is a wonderful illustration of cause and effect. In 1881 the town and suburbs contained a population of under 250,000 inhabitants. Business was then on a sound basis, after having passed through a severe period of depression during the three years following the Revolution of 1874. Several years of steady progress had placed Argentine credit on what appeared to be a firm and solid footing. Public Loans and private enterprise brought money pouring into the country in search of the high rates of interest then prevailing. A long era of speculation followed, and, during this time, an immense increase suddenly took place in the population of the capital. In 1889 it was estimated that the town and suburbs contained no less than 550,000 souls. But the municipal authorities neglected to ascertain the exact nature of this sudden growth. They classed the entire number as actual residents, instead of finding out what proportion of the augmentation was purely a temporary and floating

addition, liable to disappear at a very short notice. With this great influx from Europe, and from the country districts of the Republic itself, the city naturally became overcrowded, and the area built over expanded rapidly. The value of property rose to such an extent that prices and rents were in some instances equal to those paid in the heart of the City of London. The Municipality was urged to make improvements that at the time were, undoubtedly, greatly needed. Carried away with the idea that values would be maintained, an enormous expenditure of capital took place. Contracts of all kinds were entered into on the calculation that not only would the number of the population of the day be liable to no diminution, but that it would continue increasing in the existing abnormal manner. The boulevard that was to have extended from the Plaza Victoria through the centre of the entire town is a typical instance of the unnecessary expense that was incurred in the present, and of the mistaken confidence that was placed in the immediate future. Property was purchased at the ruling inflated values, and the estimate formed that the sale of the frontage on either side would to a large extent, compensate for the high prices paid.

Before the undertaking was near completion, the "boom" was over, and only patches of the work were accomplished. Proprietors of houses refused to allow their property to be touched until the purchase money was paid. This, the Municipality found, was an impossible condition. The frontage of such portions as were finished can now be sold only at prices that represent a

heavy loss on the initial cost. Some day the work may be completed, and will certainly be a great improvement to the city, but at present it is simply an example of an imperfectly-conceived and badly-executed plan, that has entailed a needless and wasteful expenditure. Another instance of the same kind was the contract entered into for paving the streets with wood. The price agreed upon was at the rate of £2 8s. sterling per square metre. Leaving out of the question the fact that this price was unnecessarily high, it will be seen that to cover any large area at such a cost would necessitate a very heavy drain on the Municipal resources, and was not a matter to be lightly undertaken. It could only be done if the future revenue were certain to yield an increased return. No such considerations, however, weighed with the authorities. They wanted wood pavement, and at once proceeded to get it, with the result that, before the work was a quarter finished, it had to be stopped for want of funds. I have quoted these two instances because they are patent to every visitor to Buenos Aires; scores more of a similar nature might be brought forward.

It is a matter of common report that while the Municipality is supposed to maintain a staff of two thousand horses to do the scavenging work of the city, only some five hundred are actually maintained—needless to say the cash and allowances for the full number are regularly drawn.

Gradually, but surely, the growing scarcity of employment in the towns and business centres is scattering to

the four winds of Heaven the miscellaneous collection of humanity that congregated together at certain points during the booming times of the past seven years. It is stated that in the City of Buenos Aires no less than forty-two per cent. of the population were, up to very recently, engaged in providing unnecessary luxuries for the remainder. Now the pinch of poverty is on those who were most reckless in squandering the money so easily acquired in former years. Servants have to be discharged carriages given up, houses sold, and economies practised in every possible way. On those whose occupation it has been to minister to the comforts or the follies of the rich the burden of this general retrenchment entails much privation and even misery. All classes of tradesmen are suffering keenly. In many cases they prefer to sell off their stocks of goods by public auction, and, taking what is left out of the wreck, to emigrate to other countries where the conditions of life are less difficult, and do not involve a constant struggle for bare existence. But the effects of rampant over-speculation and a long period of inflated values embrace a far more widespread area than that designated under the heading of "purveyors of luxuries" in Señor Latzina's most recent statistical compilations. To quote from actual experience is, perhaps, the most convincing proof.

A few nights ago at the Opera I found myself in close proximity to a coign of vantage, occupied by a lady well known as one of the leaders of Argentine society. A casual remark to my companion to the effect that the hard

times did not yet seem to be felt in that quarter, elicited the following reply : " You see our friend there ; well, at the beginning of the season her husband refused to take a box, on the ground that he was absolutely unable to afford the expense. Madame, however, was not satisfied to forego her anticipated pleasure, and she insisted that her horses and carriage should be sold, and the proceeds applied to paying for the seat you now see her in." Nor is this by any means an isolated instance. The attempt at showy ostentation still maintained in a few cases is only arrived at by sacrificing many comforts, and often by paring down the real necessities of life. At other times one sees crowds of well-dressed women and men, and, knowing the circumstances of many, it is puzzling to imagine how the glitter of all this fine plumage is maintained. The friend again explains that the fine feathers are the residue of last year's spoils, and that when their lustre is bedimmed by constant usage a time will arrive for native-made garments to supersede the latest fashions of Paris and London. It is not an unmitigated evil that one effect of the financial crisis should be to drive a crowded city population out into the camps and agricultural lands of the provinces.

It is an anomaly that in a country containing four millions of inhabitants, where the purchasing power is derived solely from the pastoral and agricultural capabilities of the soil, cities like Buenos Aires should exist, with a population of over 450,000 souls. That it should be so indicates an unhealthy condition in the progress of a young

country, and, moreover, one that cannot be justified by solid facts or sound arguments. Legitimate mercantile enterprise was totally inadequate to sustain this enormous burden, and an artificial and fictitious aspect of prosperity was created. The result we see in the misery and embarrassments of to-day. Every grade of the community is suffering severely. The rich have seen their wealth disappear; the poor lack the means of livelihood that the existence of that wealth provided for them.

The loss of power to indulge in luxurious living is the lightest hardship of the present phase. The word civilisation, as applied to the Argentine, must be construed differently to the tenets of European ideas. I refer more particularly to the swarm belonging to the carpet bagging era of Juarez Celman, not to the old Porteño families who are of a totally different stamp of people. Glance at the interior of the houses of any one of the many thousands of families who were suddenly translated a few years ago from the primitive simplicity of life in the Pampas to the imitation of Parisian manners and customs predominating this city—they are all of the same type; gaudy furniture wrapped up in cotton sheeting, gilt mouldings, and looking-glasses everywhere, pictures in which glaring colours offend the eye, showy *articles de luxe* on all sides. The place is full of *lujo*, but comfort and homeliness are always conspicuous by a total absence. Art, as understood in Europe, may be considered an unknown quantity, and the capacity for appreciating it does not seem to exist. To people living under such conditions it can be no hardship

to return to their former isolated mode of life on the estancias, where the time can be occupied in guarding their own interests and tending to their flocks and herds. A short time ago, a leading lawyer of this city, in reply to a question on this subject, expressed his opinion to me in the following terms:—"In former days the Argentines were farmers, and such is our legitimate vocation in life. Of course, certain individual members of families adopted various professions, but the bulk of my countrymen devoted their lives to pastoral and agricultural pursuits, and this has proved the backbone of the country through all time. Of late years people seem to have lost their senses. Immense fortunes were made by speculation. Everybody flocked into the towns, and wasted money in building palaces and indulging in *lujo* they did not need. To-day they are lamenting over their losses. The ultimate effect of this financial crisis will be to drive the people back again into the country districts, where they will have to earn their living out of the land."

To the rising generation of young men the situation is undoubtedly a very unpleasant one. During the last ten years they have lived in an atmosphere where Government appointments were showered about with a profusion born of the reckless times engendered by unlimited credit and an unbounded supply of money. *Tempora mutantur nos et mutamur in illis.* They quite realise that the haleyon days, promoted by the cash of the unfortunate European bondholders, are gone, and cannot be resuscitated. Instead of becoming lawyers and doctors, or being

dependent on political patronage and growing rich out of the abuse of credit, young men with their way to make are forced to settle down to steady and continuous work to earn a livelihood.

A short time ago, whilst talking to a gentleman well known in financial circles in this city, I inadvertently addressed him by the title of Doctor. He entered a protest at once, with the remark, "I am not a doctor; I am a plain merchant, and this country would be better off to-day if there were fewer of such titles in existence." To the tradesmen who deal in imported merchandise the crisis is bringing a bitter experience.

No more eloquent proof of this can be advanced than consists in the number of shops to be let in the very heart of the city, where, four years ago, it was impossible to obtain a foothold for love or money. With the cessation of demand, rents have fallen in proportion when the values are computed in gold. Investors in town property find their returns decreasing almost daily; and unfinished buildings, begun in better times, stare at the passer-by as a disheartening and sorrowful demonstration of unfulfilled hopes. Take another point of view, and watch the horses as they struggle over the uneven street pavements, and drag behind them the vehicular traffic of Buenos Aires. The greater part of them look starved, and, on enquiry as to the reason, one is told that the price of Indian corn is so high, and passengers so few and far between, that it is impossible now to give the animals more than half the usual rations.

On the railways the same story is heard with regard to the number of travellers. People do not undertake a journey unless compelled to do so, and the cause is the absolute necessity of strict economy in every-day life. To the labouring classes the practical cessation of all construction of railways and public works, and the restriction of all private enterprise, has been a terrible blow. Over fifty thousand emigrants left the country during the first six months of 1891. Want of means alone prevented many thousands more from following the same course. Amongst those who remain, misery and hunger stride about in the gaunt garb of terrible reality. "*Señor, déme limosna por amor de Dios*"—with such words the visitor to Buenos Aires finds himself constantly accosted.

The picture of the Buenos Aires of to-day is a sad one in the extreme, and it is heightened by the knowledge of the fact that the ill-advised liberality of European lenders has been greatly instrumental in bringing about the existing state of affairs. The people of Argentina were led into a fool's paradise by unscrupulous or ignorant promoters of loans and schemes in Europe, and they are quite as much entitled to sympathy in their misfortunes as the equally unhappy investor who has been gulled into placing his money in a country the economic conditions of which were most imperfectly understood. Such is a very slight description of some of the effects of the present financial crisis as far as the city of Buenos Aires is concerned.

A propos of the wasteful extravagance of the past, a

remark made by President Pellegrini with regard to the building erected for the main pumping station of the waterworks, at a cost of £400,000, sums up a great deal in very few words. Looking at it the other day, he said, "It is magnificent, and—a relic of the past."

Argentines, in common with foreign residents, quite recognise that the bubble has burst, and that, so far as European bondholders and investors are concerned, many a long year must elapse before the securities of this country are noted down as gilt-edged. Industrial undertakings are, on the other hand, on a different footing, and may survive where public companies fail.

IV.

EVERY-DAY LIFE IN THE ARGENTINE CAPITAL.

THE odds and ends that make up every-day existence in Buenos Aires afford some interesting facts to assist in forming an opinion of the general nature of the people who live under the flag of Argentina. Go half-a-dozen blocks away from the Plaza Victoria and look at the passers-by. Here are two genuine Gauchos coming in opposite directions. They are both dressed in ponchos, chiripás, and potro boots, with big spurs on their heels and revenques in their hands ; they are sitting on ricados —the native substitute for a saddle—and their horses are the usual small breed, the criollo of South America. When they meet it is "*Ché, Juan, qué tal amigo?*" and they then dismount at a fonda and go inside to drink and smoke cigarettes. Look up the street again, and see this old Basque coming, with his milkcans strapped on to the sides of his old mancaron, and himself complacently sitting on the top. At the corner there is another type, an Italian selling cakes and sweetmeats from a tray in front of him ; a little further on another man of the same nationality is trying to tempt people to buy some flashy bits of imitation jewellery. In fact, the Italians appear to have become the

general pedlers for not only Buenos Aires, but the whole Republic.

The Congress Hall is at the corner of the Plaza Victoria, and, although a miserably insignificant building, it is worth while going inside to see the portion allotted to the Deputies for debating purposes. It is a small circular chamber with tiers of galleries rising to the ceiling, and has more the appearance of a third-class theatre than the arena of the principal legislation of the country. As I enter, a message is being read from the President of the Republic, asking permission to absent himself for a month. This, mark you, at a time when financial measures vitally affecting the welfare, both present and future, of the country are being discussed by Congress. A Deputy asks if his Excellency is unwell, and the question is greeted with an outburst of laughter. The President of the Chamber replies that the message contains no information on this point; he then asks if anyone opposes the granting of the permission requested, and, no one raising any objection, it is declared duly sanctioned, and the President of the Senate is instructed temporarily to assume the duties of Chief Magistrate.

From the Congress Hall to the Bolsa is only across the Plaza. In the part reserved for brokers there are continual shouts of "Vendo" and "Compro," but all the business done is confined to the buying or selling of gold. On the record boards of the transactions there are a few instances of Cédulas being dealt in, and in very rare cases a few shares may be sold, but nine-tenths of the business done

is in the gold ring. It was a mystery to me how so many brokers managed to exist at all, but the explanation was that the bulk of them were simply speculators for the rise and fall, and that their means of livelihood consisted in a few hundred dollars made occasionally in "bulling" or "bearing" gold. Where a year or two ago they talked glibly of millions, they now speak feelingly of hundreds, and large transactions are very few and far between. Looking at the volume of business done to-day, and comparing it with that which used to take place some two or three years ago, one realises how complete the smash has been, and how utterly dead all speculation really is. One of the best known brokers, in answer to my question, "*Porqué sube el oro hoy?*" says "*Falta de confianza, nada mas.*" His words express fully the general feeling of the market at the present moment.

This intense inherent passion for gaming permeates the whole of the native population; moreover, the same tendency exists amongst all Spanish-speaking people. In the Clubs, high play is the rule, and is met with every day. *Pelota* and racing are merely subsidiary means of gaining the same ends. The *Gaucho*, if he cannot play cards, will spend all his cash in backing a favourite bird to win a main in the cock-fighting ring, or he will pass his time in playing *taba*, the latter a game which consists in throwing a bone to a certain distance, and betting as to whether the flat side will fall uppermost. The same spirit animates the street Arabs and newspaper boys. Their game is delightfully simple. It consists in spinning copper

coins in the air and letting them fall upon the flagged pavement; the coin that settles down nearest to the joint in the stones wins. Such ingenious methods of creating games of chance show how deeply rooted the speculative spirit must be, and how impossible it seems to entertain any hope that it may be eradicated from the ordinary routine of every-day life. Their creative genius appears to end with the faculty for furthering speculation. There is a total lack of originality amongst the Argentine natives and their methods may be said to be wholly imported.

Unfortunately, in almost every case European usages are capable of double adaptations; thoroughly understood they may be for the benefit of the individual who adopts them, but where they are only partially comprehended they are worse than useless.

In some ways the civilisation that one meets with in Argentina reminds me of an experience I once came across on the Kroo Coast of Africa, where the King of the country on State occasions appeared in a full dress, consisting of a silk hat, a linen collar, and a pair of patent leather pumps, and donned nothing else in the way of clothing.

A striking illustration of this absence of local inventiveness is seen at the *remates* (auctions) that take place by the score every day. These auctions are the means universally resorted to by the retail dealers to get rid of their accumulated stocks of goods, and many an idle hour may be whiled away in watching the heterogenous character of the crowds that attend them, and the

curiously varied assortment of articles that are offered for sale. It is a very rare thing indeed to see any single thing of native manufacture come under the auctioneer's hammer; in fact, I am inclined to agree with a friend of mine, who said that the natives possessed nothing original of their own except landed property, and that very shortly they would not even have that to bless themselves with.

Palermo Park is a spot that provides material for reflection. On Thursday afternoon all the smart folks of Buenos Aires turn out there, and drive up and down in order to see and be seen. There is a great difference discernible between now and last year. The carriages are not so well equipped, and they have a general appearance of wear and tear that often verges on absolute shabbiness. A similar change is visible in the costumes of the ladies and the clothes of the men; but the brightness and the good looks of the women-folk remain, and are as fascinating as ever.

There are few cities in the world where handsome women are met with to the same extent as in the Argentine capital. As a rule, they have a marked tendency to *embonpoint* soon after the age of five-and-twenty, but till then they are charming. To show that they sacrifice a great deal to maintain an outward appearance of show that is beyond their means, it is only necessary to quote an incident that occurred the other day in connection with the Thursday show at Palermo. A complaint was made to the authorities that the tram-

cars returning to town were overcrowded. An Inspector of Police gave evidence to prove the charge, and at the same time called the attention of the Magistrate to the fact that on the same day over four hundred carriages in the Park were noted down as not having paid the *patente*, or licence. On another and more recent occasion the Intendente of Buenos Aires gave instructions that no carriage should be admitted to the Park at the *Corso de Las Flores* unless proof was given that the *patente* had been paid. In this way a sum in cash of over \$200,000 was obtained for the Municipal Treasury. About two years ago the main drive at Palermo was lighted by a very powerful installation of electricity on the Brush system. Latterly this has been removed on account of the expense it entailed.

The Fronton of Buenos Aires affords an entirely different phase of life and people. Here it is that the Basque game of *pelota* is played. It is something like racquets, but instead of a racquet a curved wicker arrangement is strapped on to the right hand; this is called a *cesta*, and used as a bat. It is a game requiring great skill, and immense vitality and physique, but it is not for that reason that the Argentines are such ardent supporters of it. The explanation of their enthusiasm is found in the lower gallery. The truth is that the game affords a good field for betting, and so appeals to the feelings of the Argentine as a means to make an honest living. I have never yet seen a native playing the game with any degree of skill, and all the matches in Buenos Aires are between

the Basques, notwithstanding the fact that it may be considered the national game of Argentina.

One of the most amusing sights in Buenos Aires is the Calle Florida, between the hours of four and five in the afternoon, and seven and nine in the evening. It corresponds, more or less, to Regent Street, and in the afternoons and evenings all the most fashionable folk parade up and down to show themselves and meet their friends.

The mixture of nationalities is very quaint, and every now and then odd little scenes occur that show how primitive in many ways this country still is. At this corner a crowd of well-dressed people are standing chattering; they have to make way for an old Basque, who is driving some cows and calves down the street; a little further down he stops and begins milking into a jug brought to him out of one of the houses. Then he moves on, and almost directly his place is taken by an Italian organ-grinder. Here is another group of Gallegos at the next corner; they are the *changadores*, or porters, who earn their living by running messages, or carrying parcels to any part of the town. A very honest lot they are, too, and it is seldom that a complaint about them is heard. One curious fact is paramount; in very rare cases is an Argentine found doing anything that requires severe physical exertion. It is always the Italian or the Basque, or occasionally a Frenchman, and possibly a Spaniard.

In the camp, indeed, where the work is amongst cattle or horses, a native will undertake a certain amount of

hard work. On a horse he is quite at home; but put him on foot, and give him a spade to dig with, and he will leave next day.

Another phase of life in Argentina is seen on the racecourses of Palermo and Belgrano. It is a curious crowd that gathers together at those two spots on Sundays and *dias de fiesta* in the racing season. It may safely be said that the bulk of the people go there purely for the purpose of gambling, and they know little, and care less, about the actual merits of the horses. The betting is conducted on the system of the *pari mutuel*; the tickets cost two dollars each, and I have seen as many as ninety thousand tickets sold on one race. As for the racing itself, it is as poor as it well can be, and the riding is of the worst. The Argentine does not seem to have the same love of horseflesh as our countrymen, and he regards both thoroughbreds and ordinary working horses almost altogether in the light of machines, to do so much work, and does not expend upon them the slightest modicum of affection or regard. As racing provides an unlimited field for gambling, and also every now and then affords the opportunity of effecting a *coup*, the native is always willing to devote a very considerable amount of time and trouble to it, but it would be futile to say that the attention lavished upon it either indicates, or in any way arises from, a love of sport. Indeed, it may be distinctly traced to an inherent inclination to enter into speculative ventures.

The Argentines do not seem to be able to produce any

great amount of native talent or originality to cater for those in search of pleasure and amusement. There are some twenty theatres in Buenos Aires, besides a number of *cafés chantants* and *cafés dansants*. At the theatres I have only seen one native company acting, and that was directed and managed by a Spaniard. They played several pieces illustrating camp life, and one of these, *Juan Moreira*, was an excellent portraiture of every-day *Gaucho* existence. It brought forcibly to the front the typical latent love of cruelty that lies dormant in the nature of every race where a mixture of Spanish and Indian blood has taken place. When they have made a prisoner of Juan Moreira, the hero of the piece, they deliberately torture him, to extract information from him, and the audience vociferously applaud the scene. An illustration of the same spirit was seen very lately in Chile, when Balmaceda ordered nineteen boys, varying from 16 to 20 years of age, to be shot on account of their supposed sympathy with the Congressionalist cause. I remember one night being present at the performance of this play and watching a scene in which a man is lying hidden in some long grass waiting to shoot Juan Moreira as he rode by. There was a complete silence in the house, and every one was waiting for the *dénouement*. Juan appeared on the scene, and as he did so an old *Gaucho* in the body of the theatre suddenly burst out with "*Juan! cuidado ché!*" (Take care, man). The scene was evidently very real to that native, and his feelings quite carried him away.

As a rule, the companies that come to play at Buenos Aires are of a quite mediocre character, with the exception of the Italian Opera, or such very occasional visits as are paid to this city by Coquelin or some "starring" Spanish company. With the present hard times it does not pay to provide a really first-class performance, and theatre goers have to content themselves with third-rate acting. The inability of the general public to support expensive kinds of entertainment has called into existence a form of amusement that was unknown in Buenos Aires a year ago. This is the *café dansant*, where Andalusian dances are performed on a stage at the end of the *café*. No entrance money is charged, but everyone is supposed to order something to drink—it may be coffee or beer, or any other cheap and generally abominable commodity. The dancing itself is really wonderful and very graceful, but what struck me most about the scene was the class of people who frequented the various places. When they first opened these establishments the principal customers were people of the working classes. Gradually this has changed, until to-day one sees people of all kinds, many of them preferring to spend twenty cents on a cup of coffee, and while away an hour or two at one of these places, to paying for the cheapest seat at a theatre, where last year nothing short of a twenty dollar box would meet their ideas of how their enjoyment should be taken. The restaurants and hotels provide another field for observation that should not be neglected. Two years have worked great changes in them, and in the habits of those

who frequent them. Then, it was the rule to see luxurious dinners given every evening, and the best of everything was not good enough. Now, the crowds of diners have transferred their custom from the expensive establishments to the cheapest ones that can be found, and small prices are the inducement to attract customers. Even when the charges are reduced to the lowest possible level, one notices that the least possible cost is incurred, and it is necessity, not inclination, that has induced this change. The marked alteration in the habits of the general public is the most eloquent proof how tightly the shoe pinches at the present time; and force of circumstances is teaching the lesson that the after effects of a "boom" leave some very unpleasant experiences behind them.

The Tigre River is another great resort of residents in Buenos Aires on feast days and Sundays. In summer time it is charming, and the banks lined with weeping willows are picturesque in the extreme. Only an hour by train from the city, it provides opportunity for healthy exercise in the shape of rowing, and several well-supported boating clubs are found. It is, however, the foreign population that chiefly congregates there. The headquarters of the Yacht Club Argentino are also established on the river.

A very curious sight in Buenos Aires is the cemetery of the Recoleta. It is verily a city of the dead. One walks down streets shut in by tombs that are often thirty and forty feet high, and built in every known style of

architecture. It is the custom in Buenos Aires for the men to attend the funeral of any acquaintance, and the processions one meets wending their way towards the Recoleta are very pompous and somewhat imposing affairs.

V

THE FOREIGN POPULATION.

ALMOST one-third of the population of the Argentine is composed of foreigners. Notwithstanding this fact, it is the native—the *hijo del pais*—who has entire control of the administration. Moreover, he not only has the power to make laws to suit himself, but he avails himself most liberally of that privilege. Before many years have elapsed, the Italian, English, French, and German elements will be forced to make the weight of their combined numbers and interests felt in political circles. It will no longer be possible for them to sit down patiently and see legislation conducted in a manner that is tending absolutely to ruin a vast number of persons engaged in commerce and trade or connected with land or other property.

The true reason why so little respect is paid to the opinions and wishes of the foreigners is that the body of men who conduct the legislation of this country have nothing in common with them. They are not connected with commerce, they have no money in railways or industrial undertakings. Though their interest in the land is decreasing every year, hitherto it has been

sufficiently great to prevent the introduction of any laws that tend directly to lower its value.

It is only necessary to glance at the legislation of the last two years and the attitude assumed by the Government towards railway companies, and more especially those built under the guarantee of an annual subsidy, to see at once how great the hostility is towards foreigners. It is hardly possible to imagine a more unjust tax than that of 2 per cent. on the deposits in private banks or the enormous patent that all foreign insurance companies are called upon to pay. All this tends to indicate that the time is not far distant when joint action on the part of the foreigners will be an absolute necessity in order to save their interests not only from ruin, but total annihilation. The *hijo del pais* will find then that the *gringo* he professes to despise so much, and whom he regards chiefly in the light of a source from which to grow rich will be quite a match for him.

The Italians form by far the most numerous section of the foreigners. In Buenos Aires and in all the country towns it is almost invariably the Italian who keeps the *almacenes*, or general stores. Emigrants from Italy are the recognised agricultural labourers; and it is to them that the railway contractor turns when heavy earthworks require to be built. As mechanics they are pre-eminent here, either as masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, or for the decorative work that is so dear to the bulk of the Argentines. For steady hard work they have no equal in this country, and, moreover, they assimilate thoroughly

with the conditions of climate and life in Argentina. When they are obliged to be exposed to the sun, the heat of which makes life a burden to an Englishman, they merely think that it reminds them of their own home, and when their food consists for months together of maccaroni and meat they are happy and contented, and wish for no better fare.

As farmers the Italians are better adapted for this country than any other nationality. They are hard-working, economical, and thrifty; the profits they make are invested in the purchase of more land; and each year sees a greater number of them taking to agriculture on their own account. Of course, where so many of one nationality exist, a certain percentage of them will be found in the higher branches of commerce, but it is less so in this city than it would be natural to expect. Of large importing houses and general business concerns, Italians have a good share in Buenos Aires, but in banking and financial circles they are somewhat meagrely represented. There are, it is true, several Italian banking concerns, notably the Nuevo Banco Italiano and the Banco de Italia y Rio de la Plata, but they are not of any great importance.

In time this will probably correct itself, as the accumulation of savings will, after a lapse of time, find a natural outlet in the establishment of banks and loan and trust companies, and in building railways and other works of public utility. In the meantime, the Italian is the most important factor to-day in the development of the

country, and without him it would be totally impossible to take advantage of the resources that exist in Argentina.

Next to the Italians come the English. They it is who have provided the money for nearly every public work of importance in the country. The railways have been constructed with English capital, and the work done by English contractors. The English banks have always held the first place in Buenos Aires, and they still do so, in spite of the unfortunate failure of one of the best-known institutions of the kind only a short time ago. In the commercial world of Buenos Aires ten years ago England had almost a monopoly, but now this is very far from being the case, and other nationalities, especially the Germans, have absorbed a very large proportion of the volume of business done. As shopkeepers the English are practically non-existent, and the number of their establishments devoted entirely to retail trade might be counted on the fingers of both hands. In the "camp" the English stand out head and shoulders above any other nationality as *estancieros*; they own more land, they understand the work better, and in every way the life is more suited to their natural inclinations and tastes than it is to those of any other section of the foreigners who come to the shores of Argentina. But in this it must be clearly understood that I only refer to Englishmen in the capacity of owners, or in positions of trust, where they have to superintend work; as *peones*, or servants, they cannot compete for a moment with the native *gaucho* for tending live stock, or

with the Italian or Basque for manual labour. Whether it is the climate, the different class of food, or the difficulty of acquiring the language, has never been satisfactorily explained, but perhaps it may be a combination of all three that makes the Englishman undesirable as a working servant in Argentina. In any case, the fact remains that the concensus of opinion is most decidedly adverse to him. For this reason, it is unlikely that the number of Englishmen will predominate here in the future, although the actual vested interest of our countrymen will probably always continue to be far greater than that of any other European nation, the more so because the acquirement of landed estates has a special fascination for the English capitalist.

The Welsh Colony on the Chubut River in Patagonia is also well worthy of notice. It was founded some thirty years ago, and the colonists fought a hard battle for many long years. To-day the settlement contains over four thousand souls, and their language of every-day life is Welsh. In very many cases, even amongst those born in the colony, no knowledge of Spanish exists. The settlement was so entirely cut off from the outside world that the only human beings that the colonists were brought in contact with were the Patagonian Indians. The colony to-day is most prosperous and last year exported over five thousand tons of wheat. The farms are all in the river valley and the crops are grown by the aid of irrigation.

Next in importance to the English, and numerically far stronger, come the French. This nationality forms a

very useful class in the Argentine, and while Paris is not so largely interested as London in loans to the Government, it still has a very large stake in the indebtedness of the country, and in some of the large railway undertakings that have sprung up of late years. In the higher business circles of Buenos Aires a due proportion of Frenchmen are found, but it is amongst the classes that devote themselves specially to keeping hotels and restaurants, and in the retail shops, that their importance is manifested. They form, in this capacity, a part of the community that could ill be spared, and, moreover, they have brought from their own country most of the civilising influences that are found in the Buenos Aires of to-day. In the camp, too, as general utility hands, they run the Italians very close, and as household servants or gardeners they are decidedly superior. The French Basque is a sturdy, hardworking, and intensely saving individual ; he is an excellent farmer when working in his own interests ; and little by little he has absorbed almost entirely the milk and vegetable trade for the whole of Buenos Aires. French and Spanish Basques exhibit the same characteristics ; they do not care for employment as ordinary labourers in the same way as the Italians do ; they prefer rather to act as porters in the towns, to hold positions as confidential *peones*, or to make their living by supplying the market with all the minor necessities of life. They are a distinct type by themselves, and they seldom mix much with Spaniards or natives, or, indeed, with any other nationality ; they have, in fact, a great deal of the old Scotch clan sentiment about

them, and they religiously adhere to this feeling in working together as much as possible.

The Germans are steadily increasing in both numbers and importance. They are largely interested in provincial and municipal loans, and they have a considerable financial stake in the country, in the shape of heavy advances made to many and various industrial undertakings. Of late years the German Bank has become a most important factor in Buenos Aires financial circles. In the purchase of produce for export they may be said to take the first place, and there is scarcely any branch of business that they are not connected with in some way. In the pastoral and agricultural districts one finds them employed as shepherds, and, to some extent, as labourers, but in the latter case it is, as a rule, only as farm hands. As colonists they do well, and in some of the lands devoted to German settlement they have prospered and made money. They appear rather to keep themselves apart from the other foreigners, although of late years the instances of intermarriage with natives have been much more common than formerly. Of the other nationalities the Spaniards are the most numerous and important, but, with the exception of the Basques and Gallegos, they mix so readily and assimilate so entirely with the native Argentines that they speedily acquire all the customs of the country. The North American is, of course, represented in Buenos Aires, but the capital invested from the United States, and the volume of business involved by it, is extremely small. Belgium has invest-

ments in Government Loans, and also in Cedulas, but Belgian subjects are not numerous. Scandinavians and Swiss are met with occasionally in business circles, and the latter have been very successful as colonists in various parts of the country, but they do not constitute an important section of the population.

Sooner or later this mixture of races from the Old World must band together and make common cause against a system of government that prevents them from reaping the full benefit of their labour, and retards their progress at every turn of the wheel. Plato says that the punishment which the wise suffer who refuse to take part in the government is to live under the government of worse men. This is a maxim that the foreigners in Argentina will do well to take seriously to heart. The remedy is for them to become naturalised citizens, and to insist upon proper representation in the Councils of the nation and a proper voice in the administration of affairs. Civilised government will only come when that stage of reform is reached. All the nonsense that is talked in Europe about the advanced state of intelligence and modern ideas prevalent in Argentina is probably derived from the same source that gave rise to the popular idea that the Chilians call themselves the English of South America. I asked a Chilian officer one day how this idea was started, and his answer was that he supposed because "they smoked pipes and got drunk." In the same way Buenos Aires has been called the Southern Paris, and for no other apparent reason than

that some of the men talked French, the women preferred Parisian frocks, and the inhabitants generally are fond of pleasure and adopt ways of life that are suited to a climate where bright sunshine is the rule for the great majority of the days in the year.

VI.

THE CAMP.

TIME is steadily working a complete change in the elements that go to make up the country life in Argentina. The Gauchos, who drove the Indians back in former times, are themselves being pushed away in front of the advance of civilisation and the immigration from the Old World. They cannot tolerate hard work ; gradually, therefore, and almost without knowing it, they are being ousted from the lands they have occupied for generations past. It is the battle between labour and idleness ; the former every year gathers greater strength, whilst the latter surely becomes more enfeebled and less able to resist the progress of civilisation. For the material prosperity of the country it is well that it should be so, but it destroys almost entirely the few picturesque features that once lent a certain charm to life in the South American Pampas. The existence has now become prosaic and monotonous, a matter of routine, but not without compensations. There is a good climate, and the bucolic spirit drives away all the worry appertaining to the financial crisis in Buenos Aires. Once get rid of city life, and the whole face, and with it the complexion, of Nature in this country seems to change. The

air is fresher, the everlasting friction of politics is forgotten, and the burning question of the premium on gold is ignored for the moment.

One of my first experiences of Argentine country life was an odd one. The train left me at a wayside station, and the *estancia* to which I was going was some three leagues away. My letter stating the time of my arrival had gone astray, and no conveyance had come to meet me. By good luck I managed to get a message taken through to say that I should like a vehicle sent to fetch myself and my traps. In the meantime, I found that a wait of four hours at least was unavoidable. I resigned myself to the inevitable, and surveyed the surrounding scene, in the hope of finding material for amusement. There was the railway station, consisting of four rooms; in front, a goods shed; at the back, a *rancho*, inhabited by some native children; in the foreground (and here hope revived) there was a *pulperia* and a *fonda*, combined under one roof. To this last building I made my way, and the interior of it was a picture well worth seeing. The owner of the store was an Italian, and the wares for sale consisted of a variety of all sorts, from the big *facones* usually carried in the camp up to tins of sardines. At one end was a bar, where a group of natives were regaling themselves on raw caña, the vilest of vile spirits. I was hungry, and asked what could be got to eat. Mine host of the *fonda* promptly provided me with an *asado*, consisting of beef roasted in front of the fire, and some *galletas*, a kind of biscuit that is more like a piece of flint than aught else. Nothing daunted, I

attacked this whilst I was being entertained with all the gossip of the country round. The landlord bewailed the fact that things were rapidly changing now, and that the old race of Gauchos were disappearing. His chief regret on this score was based on the fact that in former days it was their custom to come to these *pulperias* and drink away all the money they possessed. Invariably, too, there was some excitement about this performance, as a fight with knives was the usual ending, and very often one or two of the men were killed. Now, he explained, the men very seldom got drunk, and everything was much too civilised to admit of a really prosperous business being done. This same spot I had noted down as one of the places on which a large advance had been made by a Mortgage Bank under the "Centro Agricola" law. I examined carefully the site of the supposed agricultural centre, and the portion allotted to the township, of which I had seen a very fine survey on paper before leaving Buenos Aires. The result of my investigations was to discover here and there a few pegs in the ground that had been placed there when the land was surveyed, but beyond this no sign was visible of any endeavour having been made to carry out the conditions on which the money had been advanced. On my return to the *fonda* the landlord suggested *mate*. I assented cordially, and the preparations were begun, in the shape of getting ready the *yerba* and boiling water. Taking *mate* is one of the most commendable of native customs. It is made from the leaf of the Paraguayan tea, a little of which is put into a

hollow pear-shaped gourd, and on to it is poured boiling water. The *maté* is then sucked through a *bombilla*, a spoon-shaped tube. In one way it is a little trying at first to the foreigner, as the one tube is passed on in the *maté* pot from one to the other person, and it is little short of an insult to wipe the end before inserting it in one's own mouth. Such trivialities, however, are soon disregarded, and the *maté* itself is pleasant and refreshing.

By this time the trap had arrived for me, and after a couple of hours' drive I found myself in what might very well have been a country house in England. There was no trace of Argentina about the organisation of the buildings or of the work that was carried on. It was simply stock-farming, as it might have been conducted in any of our own Colonies. A few natives were employed for work amongst the horses and cattle, but nearly all the hands were foreigners, chiefly Italians, and in the case of the shepherds, some Germans. A few Irish *porteños*—that is, men born in the country of Irish parents—were employed, but the number of these was very limited. I asked what rations these men got, and was informed that they had as much meat as they could eat, in addition *galletas*, *maté*, or, in the case of foreigners, tea; and a little rice, sugar, and salt was served out to them regularly. The rate of wages was twenty dollars currency per month for ordinary *peones*, whilst a bonus of fifty per cent. was given to them as long as the gold premium kept in the neighbourhood of three hundred per cent. With their wages and conditions the men appeared to be perfectly well satisfied.

The comprehensive term of "the camp" is applied to the whole of this country outside of the city of Buenos Aires. Probably it crept into use amongst the English-speaking community merely as a contraction of the Spanish word *campo*, since camp in our own language would convey a different meaning. With the "camp" is naturally associated the *estancia* life in Argentina. But it is very necessary to discriminate between the life in the older settled portions of the country, and that which exists in the outlying districts unconnected, as yet, by railways with the commercial centres, and where, until very lately, the sole occupants of the land were tribes of Indians. The modern *estancia* within a few hours' railway journey of Buenos Aires has undergone very radical alterations in the course of the last twenty years. Where a *rancho* formerly stood, a brick house has been built, and round this a garden has been laid out. Plantations of trees have been made on all sides, and avenues of eucalypti, groves of silver wattle, clumps of paraisos, and waving lines of tall poplars stand in the place where a very short time ago nothing was to be seen but the native grass of the pampas. The surrounding country has also undergone a complete transformation. Fifteen years ago a horseman could ride for a hundred leagues at a stretch, and find never a fence to impede him on his journey. Now, if a radius of a hundred leagues be taken from Buenos Aires, it would be a very difficult matter to come upon a single property that was not shut in by wire fences. It is an endless monotony of them. They

impress one, however, with an idea of practical utility, and, perhaps, deserve admiration from that point of view. In fact, one of the standpoints from which to judge progress in Argentina is the weight of fencing wire that is annually absorbed by the country. It is rather quaint to find oneself measuring the advance of civilisation by the number of yards contained in a fence, but, after all, it is a very practical method to establish as a standard for the flat, uninteresting expanses that formed the pampas of the olden days.

For Englishmen there is, undoubtedly, a very great charm and attraction in life on an *estancia*. A man can make his own choice as to whether he prefers the cut and dried routine and semi-civilisation of the inside camps, or the absolutely free life of the Far West or South. Both offer a healthy kind of existence; the first, one of comparative comfort; the second, freedom from every kind and form of conventionality, and the necessity of enduring hardships that Europeans have no idea of. Take a glance at the life of a modern *estancia*, and, on the whole, one is constrained to admit that it is a very happy one, notwithstanding the fact that it is somewhat of an animal existence, and provides very little subject matter for mental food. But for a very large proportion of young Englishmen who have been brought up at Public Schools, and who have neither inclination nor aptitude for office work, it is a godsend that such a place as Argentina exists. True that without capital they are not likely to make rapid fortunes; but, on the other hand,

they can live a healthy life, spent principally in the open air, be well treated, and earn sufficient to be in no man's debt, provided that they keep steady and sober. The term *estancia* more particularly applies to lands devoted to grazing purposes, as distinguished from the *chacra*, or agricultural farm. The former is the class of investment which has up till now been the backbone of the country.

Of late years the breeds of sheep, cattle, and horses have been enormously improved by the importation of foreign blood, and at such *estancias* as Negrete, Las Rosas, or Espartillar pure shorthorn cattle are kept that would contrast favourably with any show animals in England. During the visit of H.R.H. the Duke of Clarence and H.R.H. the Duke of York to Buenos Aires in 1880 they spent several days at Negrete, and in the garden is a well-grown cedar tree that the Duke of Clarence planted in memory of his visit. The speciality of Negrete is sheep, and this year an average of seven hundred and sixteen dollars each was obtained for fifteen rams sold in Buenos Aires. Las Rosas is famous for its thorough-bred racing stock, and there is an annual sale of two-year-olds, which this year averaged five thousand two hundred dollars a head.

On such places as the three mentioned the life is much the same as it is in the country in England, though in some respects there is greater freedom about it. Still, owned by Englishmen and worked on English methods, they are thoroughly European, and they represent a totally different atmosphere from the one met with

amongst native surroundings. It is pleasanter, possibly, to live in; but it has not the same interest to a visitor, as it lacks any facility for studying native characteristics, and, as a rule, it is those traits of native character that one specially desires to observe. A visit I paid to an *estancia* in Santa Fé was instructive as an illustration of how Land Companies fare when directed by London Boards of Directors. In the instance in question, a huge house had been erected, at a cost of thirty-five thousand pounds, and an equal sum had been expended in attempting to improve land that was of little or no intrinsic value. The folly in uselessly squandering such enormous sums of money earned for the Company in question the *sobriquet* of *los locos Ingleses* from the natives in the vicinity. The country in the neighbourhood was very different from the land in Buenos Aires. Here there was nothing to be seen but the coarse paja or pampas grass, with its high, graceful flower. It was picturesque, certainly; but provided very little substance for grazing purposes, and no encouragement to undertake agricultural work.

A native I was talking to one day about the lands summed them up admirably in the sentence, "*Son tierras para hombres ricos, pero absolutamente inutil para los pobres.*" Nevertheless, it was to this very property that it was proposed to despatch from England large numbers of people to found agricultural colonies. It was in this part of the world that I made my first acquaintance with *charqui* as an article of diet. I had been in the saddle since four a.m.,

and arrived about midday at a woodcutters' camp. The *capitaz* gave me the best he had, which consisted of *maté* and *charqui*. The latter is beef cut into thin strips, and dried in the sun. To me it seemed a *fac-simile* of shoe leather, with a slight taste of bad meat about it. No doubt, it is very nourishing food, but it requires some little practice to acquire the habit of consuming it readily. That woodcutters' camp was a curious sight, and shows to what lengths men will go to earn a living. There were some thirty men in it, nearly all Italians ; they lived in the open air, in a place infested with myriads of flies and mosquitos ; their food consisted of *charqui* and *maté*, and occasionally some *galletas*. Their earnings were only a bare pittance per diem, made by contracting to cut logs at so much per hundred. The *capitaz* in charge of the party was a cheery individual who made light of all the hardships that had to be endured.

A week after my visit to him the Indians made a raid down from the Chaco, and the *capitaz* was amongst those who were killed. From the *estancia* I have spoken of, I drifted down to a place called Rafaela, the centre of what is probably the most successful agricultural district in Argentina. In the neighbourhood I had a good opportunity of seeing how the *chacras*, or agricultural farms, were conducted, and also of ascertaining the class of people who made their living out of this branch of industrial enterprise. But I cannot pass by the township of Rafaela without a few words about it. My own experience tells me that it is one of the best of its kind in the

country. All I can say, however, is that, if ever a man wishes to know what it is to have an inclination to commit suicide, let him spend a week in a camp town in the Argentine. As Rafaela is one of the leading towns of this sort, it is more than probable that in less than a week in any one of the others a coroner's inquest would have to be convened. The misery of living in the filth and accumulated dirt of a *fonda* that is designated by the name of an hotel is occasionally varied by the occurrence of a wet day, when to go out of doors means the necessity of wading up to one's knees in black mud. After a few days of it all, a meal of *charqui* seems a luxury, compared to the garlic-loaded food that one has to subsist upon, or starve.

A very large proportion of the colonists round about Rafaela consists of German families. My knowledge of their language is confined to a vocabulary comprising about a dozen words. Out amongst the *chacras* I started by making up a sentence in the language of the Fatherland, and throwing it at the first German owner of a *rancho* I came across. The effect was electrical—we became at once sworn friends, and promptly relapsed into talking bad Spanish. I was taken round and introduced to a dozen or more of these *chacareros*, and from them learned the story of their trials and experiences since they began the farming work they were now occupied with. Most of them had done fairly well, and they now had holdings varying from eighty to a thousand acres in extent. They had begun always in a very small way,

and had worked the land with their families. As a rule, they had paid the purchase-money in instalments, and, until the whole amount had been paid off, they had been content to live in the mud *ranchos* of one or two rooms that were scattered about in various directions. When the cost of the land has been paid, they had increased their holdings, and in some cases built brick cottages. As a rule, they had secured good harvests, only interfered with now and again by the hailstorms, but when these came the damage suffered was very severe. On the whole, they were well satisfied with their lot, and the political condition of the country seemed to have little interest for them. They complained greatly of the stoppage of payment by the Provincial Bank of Santa Fé as many of them had deposited their savings in it. They felt the depreciation of the paper dollar, insomuch that it necessitated paying so many more dollars for the ploughs or machinery needed for the cultivation of the land. But on the other hand the higher price in currency that they obtained for their wheat apparently more than counterbalanced this loss. They also said that now all they could do with the money they obtained for their produce was to buy more land with it, or to keep the paper money locked up in their houses. They told me, in answer to my question as to how many crops could be taken off the land before it began to seriously deteriorate, that after five or six years' cropping they had to break up new land. The conviction I came away with was that in this country agriculture was an excellent thing for a

working man to undertake, provided that he had a family of four or five persons to assist him, and so was independent of hired labour; but it did not strike me as being a very remunerative investment for a capitalist to enter into, where a costly staff would have to be allowed for and the wages of a large number of labourers to be paid. Italians, who are the working population of Argentina, will work all day and all night if it is for themselves, but when it comes to a wage of so much a day for somebody else, it is quite another matter. At the time I am speaking of, the locusts that are now doing so much harm had not put in an appearance. How they have affected my colonist friends during the present year I have not yet heard; but the danger of loss from this evil is very great, and in many cases the savings of years of hard work may be entirely swept away.

In 1890 the entire crop of maize in the province of Buenos Aires was practically destroyed by this pest, and the total export of this product was only 40,000 tons as compared to 750,000 tons in the previous year.

An *estancia* that stands out prominently as an example of what perfection can be attained with live stock in Argentina is that of Señor Leonardo Pereira. It is situated close to the city of La Plata, and comprises some 35,000 acres of magnificent grazing land. The house stands in the centre of a most charming park of some two hundred acres, and the whole of this area is planted with trees and ornamental shrubs imported from abroad. Every year Señor Pereira brings prize animals

from England, to maintain the excellence for which his herds of pure Durham and Hereford cattle are noted.

Another very famous estate is that of the Curamalán Company. Up to the year 1890 the whole estate practically belonged to Mr. Edward Casey, who was ruined in the crash in Monte Video. Since then it has been virtually taken over by the representatives of Messrs. Baring Brothers on account of mortgages contracted and moneys advanced by them. A short description of the estate and the condition it was in at the time that the administration passed into the hands of Messrs. Baring may be of interest. It serves also as an illustration of what uses land in the southern portion of the republic can be turned to.

The Company's property is situated in the Province of Buenos Aires, at a distance of about 350 miles from the capital, and about 100 miles from Bahia Blanca. It contains an area of 106 square leagues, equal to 710,000 acres. It is intersected by the Southern Railway, and four of the stations are on the property. Large Colonies have been formed at Pigüé, Arroyo Corto, and Sance Corto. In all, some four hundred families are located at these three places. Wheat is the principal cereal cultivated. The country at Curamalán is subject to severe Summer frosts, and it is doubtful if the district will ever rank high for grain growing. The land is undulating and more specially adapted for sheep raising than any other industry. The Ventana range of mountains runs through the eastern portion of the property.

A curious fact in natural history occurs in connection with the streams rising in this range. All those that flow inland, and disappear finally in the plains, have different varieties of edible fish in them. Those flowing into the sea have absolutely none, with the exception of small fry, which do not attain a length greater than an inch and a half. This is the more extraordinary, as the bay at Bahia Blanca, into which some of these streams discharge, is swarming with fish life. The stock at Curamalán, in March, 1890, consisted of 43,000 head of horned cattle, 17,000 horses, and 198,000 sheep. During the year 1891 nearly 15 per cent. increase were added to this number. In March, 1890, the Stock was valued, in the aggregate, at 2,984,827 dols. This equals, at the gold premium then existing, £271,347. The Curamalán lands are refining rapidly, and the coarse grasses are disappearing in a most satisfactory manner. In five years the property will carry double the number of stock it does at present. In the balance-sheet published March 31st, 1890, the net profit is put down at 783,969 dols.; this equals, say, £71,269. The gross returns were 1,485,788 dols. The total expenses 701,819 dols. This leaves a margin of over £70,000 to meet interest on Debentures and distribute as profit to Shareholders. The high premium on gold, which has proved so disastrous to commercial interests in Buenos Aires, has, in reality, been a source of profit to those *estancieros* who have not incurred debts in gold. The wages of the hands they employ are no higher now than they were a year ago.

In the majority of cases the rations consumed are grown on the *estancias*, and cost no more than formerly. Sheep have risen in value during the last twelve-months. Good cattle still fetch a fair price in currency, though ruling at much lower values than was the case three or four years ago. The difficulty at present, both with cattle and horses, is that the market is somewhat overstocked. In time the meat freezing and canning establishments will probably consume the surplus meat. In the case of Curamalán, the gold premium has undoubtedly been a most serious impediment to progress. This is due to the fact that the Debenture interest had to be met in pounds sterling. Notwithstanding this heavy drag on the resources of the enterprise, a fair profit has been shown; and, under careful management, satisfactory results may be expected in the future.

VII.

LIFE ON A PATAGONIAN ESTANCIA.

THE life led on what are called "outside" estancias is a very different one from the placid existence spent in those districts where railways and other easy means of communication make transport a matter of no difficulty. To begin with, the aspect of the land changes altogether. Instead of the monotonous expanse of open plain met with in the province of Buenos Aires, only broken by wire fences, or clumps of trees that have been planted round the houses, the country south of the Rio Negro is one vast stretch of mountains. In quite as great contrast is the life in those wild and unpopulated regions to that passed in places where long-established settlements have made comfort, and luxuries of all kinds, easy to obtain. Lately, I had an opportunity of visiting an estancia in Patagonia, which necessitated travelling on horseback for over six hundred miles. To such a place news and letters find their way very rarely, and seldom oftener than three or four times in the course of a year. One of the first things that struck me, as all traces of civilisation disappeared, was that everything was begun at the wrong end. If the people I encountered partook of a meal at

which they had both soup and meat, they began with the meat, and finished with the soup; if they happened to have any fish, they consumed this after the meat and before the soup. One day I noticed that the lid of a kettle was put on upside down, and, on asking the reason for this, was told by the Indian boy who was standing by it that such was always the custom. The inhabitants of Patagonia, instead of acting like ordinary mortals, and consuming liquids with their food, have the invariable custom of drinking only before or after eating. Even when they lie down to sleep, they do not conform to the usual custom of mankind, but stretch themselves out flat on their stomachs, and cover up head and all with a blanket.

The headquarters of the estancia were located in a house that was fourteen feet square, built of stone and mud; the floor consisted of the ground, in the condition that Nature had placed it there; the roof was almost flat, and made of boughs of shrubs, on the top of which were piled up some six inches of mud. Through this covering the rain came pouring down in wet weather to such an extent that the dwellers in this primitive abode generally left it, because, they said they found it dryer outside. The alternative to this residence was the shelter afforded by two broken down tents, made of thin calico. The furniture was in keeping with the building. It consisted of a plank to do duty for a table, another one as a bench, and two or three empty boxes to take the place of chairs. In the corners were some piles of very dirty old bags,

and thrown on the top of these were guanaco skins. These formed general lounges in the daytime, and at night did duty for beds and bedding. Against the wall a board had been fixed up to act as a shelf, and for additional security it had been connected to the roof by strips of raw hide. On this was piled up a varied assortment of bits of meat, grease, candle ends, yerba, sugar, tea, salt, tobacco, dirty pieces of cloth, and, in fact, it formed a receptacle for almost every article that was used in the establishment. The food consisted of meat, either boiled or toasted in front of the fire on an *asador*, some farina (which more closely resembled sawdust than anything else), and, to follow the repast, some *maté*, or sometimes tea; if the latter, it was generally very weak, and without the luxury of milk. The number of available plates did not amount to more than five tin ones; the cutlery was comprised in the extensive assortment of four forks; to cut up his meat each man used the sheath knife he carried in his belt. Three or four tin mugs and a kettle made up the whole of the dinner service. To complete the general effect, there was an appearance and atmosphere of dirt and filth over both house and food, and a result was arrived at that the most careless cottager in England would shrink from in blank dismay.

It was the shearing season at the period of my visit, and when meal time came round it brought into the house the *mayordomo*, his assistant, and two *capataces*, fresh from the sheep yards. They were coated with dirt and grease from head to foot, their hands and clothes

plentifully bespattered with blood, and their general exterior far more resembling that of brute animals than human beings. Washing was a luxury they seldom indulged in, and they sat down to gnaw and tear at their food like so many wild beasts; and yet all these men had, more or less, been brought up amongst civilised surroundings, and had simply degenerated into their present mode of life from force of long habit. The *peones* working at the shearing were principally Indians, with here and there a dash of Spanish blood showing in their features. The knowledge these men have of any kind of work, except possibly with live stock, is of the most limited description, and the way they shear sheep would drive an Australian squatter out of his senses. They first tie down the animal, and then proceed to cut and slash it about as if the object was not only to take off the wool, but to remove at the same time an equally large portion of the skin. In Patagonia, however, it is necessary to employ these men or none at all, as Italians and labourers from other provinces will not face the privations incidental to life in the far South. The materials for working with were as primitive as the men employed to use them were untutored. In place of properly constructed yards, the sheep were worked in small corales made out of brushwood, as no timber was available in the vicinity, and the heavy cost of transport prohibited the importation of suitable material. The shearing was done on hides thrown down upon the ground, and the wool loosely packed in bags, which were

exposed to wind and weather until an opportunity was found to send them to the seaboard for shipment to Buenos Aires.

The routine of duty is a very regular one during the Summer months. All hands are turned out by daybreak, and each one goes to his work. In the case of men with sheep or cattle to look after, they are, as a rule, away the greater part of the day, and it is often night-time before they get back to the rancho. Then there is a meal of some sort, and immediately afterwards everybody goes to sleep for the seven or eight hours' rest that a long day's riding has well prepared them for. In addition to those employed in looking after the live stock, there is one man whose duty it is to keep the estancia books, attend to the issue of rations, and supervise many other minor details. In most cases the bookkeeper has also to take charge of a general store in miniature; this is kept for the benefit of the hands employed on the estancia, and contains an assortment of clothes and other necessaries. These the Patagonian estanciero has to provide a stock of, since, owing to the fact that the settlements are many hundred miles apart, it is impossible for the *employés* to obtain any kind of merchandise unless the employer brings it up to the estancia for them. The evils and inconveniences connected with the depreciation of the paper currency are continually felt in this question of supplying necessary articles to the labourers. To them the dollar is precisely the same as when gold was to be obtained in exchange

for the paper notes. They are absolutely ignorant of the way affairs have shaped themselves in Buenos Aires, and they do not believe the employer when he explains that the articles they wish to purchase are imported, and have to be paid for in gold, and that it is, therefore, necessary to charge so many more dollars for them. The *peon* cannot follow out this train of reasoning at all ; what he does understand is that he is getting almost the same wages as formerly, and yet he is asked to pay four times as much for his goods—the result is that at the present time every *peon* considers that he is being cheated. All these explanations have to be continually reiterated by the bookkeeper, and the task is not always a pleasant one ; but his duty is not, however, always confined to the house. Occasionally, if it should happen that the man who usually kills the sheep or cattle for the meat rations is absent, he is called upon to act as butcher, and he has then to kill, skin, and cut up the animals wanted for meat. I saw one man who had spent all his time in an office in Buenos Aires arrive on the scene ; there happened to be a press of work at the time, and, in addition to his duties as bookkeeper and accountant, he was told to cut up the meat rations and fill up all his spare time in loading bricks into some mule carts. In fact, the life is one where a man, no matter what his nominal employment is, must be ready to turn his hands to anything that requires to be done, and unless he is ready to do so, and to work hard at whatever it may be, he is practically useless. The position of the manager,

if the place is on at all a large scale, is a most trying and difficult one. He has to be responsible for everything, and not only has to see that everyone does the work allotted to him, but also that it is efficiently done. This is no easy task in a corner of the world where men of any kind are scarce, and where it is necessary to employ almost anybody who offers his services, or else accept the alternative of being constantly short-handed.

As a rule, the overseer, or *mayordomo*, and the sub-overseers, or *capataces*, are foreigners; sometimes Argentines are found in these positions, but they seldom care to face the intense cold and many hardships that have to be endured in Patagonia. The bulk of the *peones* are Chilians or Indians; the former are fairly good workers when properly supervised, but they require constantly looking after; the Indians are useful for work amongst cattle and horses, but they are very lazy, and for handling sheep, or for any kind of continuous drudgery, they are practically of no value, and, moreover, not to be depended on in any case of difficulty or emergency. They are one and all totally incapable of resisting the fascination of caña, if by any possible means it is obtainable, and when any kind of intoxicating liquor is to be had they will remain in a hopelessly drunken state for weeks together. In some ways they are simple-minded people enough, and an instance of it occurred to myself. On one occasion I was at my wit's end for horses to carry me on my journey, and could not obtain any for love or money, when an Indian offered to provide me with what I wanted if

I would give him a pair of lace-up riding boots. This question of *peones* is one of the most difficult that estancieros in Patagonia have to deal with, and it appears to be one that will present serious obstacles to the development of the country for many years to come.

In the Winter the life is a hard one. The cold is very severe, and heavy snowstorms are of frequent occurrence. During these the live stock generally, and especially the cattle, scatter about in all directions; and, as there are no fences to bar the way, it needs every available hand to keep them on the ranges, and to avoid serious losses. Often it happens that the men have to sleep out in the snow, with nothing more to cover themselves with than the blankets they carry under their saddles. It may be that there is no firewood of any kind in the vicinity, and, at times, the sufferings that are undergone are no child's play. I remember one case in which an estancia was snowed up for over five weeks, and it was impossible to send any rations up to it. With great difficulty, the man in charge, a North American, succeeded in sending a messenger to the manager, and, after describing the plight matters were in, and saying that all they had been able to get to eat for three weeks past had been beef and hot water, wound up his letter with the words, "It is a long dark road, and we are in a hard hole for grub." With decent management, however, added to a little foresight with regard to the possibilities that may happen during the Winter months, there is no need for any estancia to run short of provisions, no matter

how severe the season may be, or how much snow may fall. The greatest danger is for the live stock. The cattle can generally find plenty to exist upon, and the same may be said of the horses, but with sheep the losses are, occasionally, very severe, and in places the snow is too deep for them to obtain any food at all.

In spite of all the privations and hardships it entails, there are many redeeming features about this life in Patagonia. The work is all of a kind to make a man healthy and strong, and he gradually drifts into a stage when he ceases to look for any of the luxuries of civilisation. He leads a perfectly free and independent existence, can be happy enough if he likes, and, in many cases, ends by clinging to it in preference to returning again to the civilised world.

There is an abundance of sport, chiefly with guanacos and ostriches. To get at either necessitates fast galloping and good dogs, the kind generally used being a cross between a greyhound and a Scotch staghound. It is very seldom that any other weapon is used than the *bolas*, and these the natives and Indians throw with very great precision and force, and cripple an animal to such an extent that they can get up to it and use a knife to finish it. The young animals are the ones that the Indians usually try to kill, as it is with the skins of these that they make rugs for use and sale. When a guanaco becomes two or three years old, he loses all his fine wool, and in place of it grows a coarse hair that is of little value. A guanaco travels very fast over any kind of

broken country, and usually makes for the most inaccessible ridges. It is wonderful to see the way the men gallop over the rocky hills, and how seldom they come to grief; even when a horse does fall, the rider generally alights on his feet, and is jeered at if he lands on the ground in any other position. The work amongst the cattle, too, is often as exciting as anything a man can wish to see, and the way these men can use a lasso on animals going at full gallop, and the dexterity displayed by them, is a wonderful sight to watch.

Now and then an impromptu race meeting takes place. This is hardly conducted according to English Jockey Club Rules, but, nevertheless, it is an amusing function to witness. The jockeys usually ride bare-backed to save weight, and they carry on their persons the smallest modicum of clothes for the same reason. The men nearly all bet on their own selections, and if they have no ready money they wager a horse against so many dollars. From start to finish, the little *criollo* horses are pushed along at the best pace they can muster, and a large amount of enthusiasm is expended on the finish by the spectators. After each race, the settling-up is done with much raillery and perfect good humour.

There is still one more branch of sport that Patagonia provides in abundance, and that is fishing. The streams in the Cordillera of the Andes and the fresh-water lakes are well-stocked with trout, pejerey, cat-fish, and several other species. Whether these can be induced to take a fly remains to be proved, but they are easily caught with a

spoon or any ordinary bait, as I can vouch for by my personal experience.

Such is, very briefly, a sketch of the condition and manner of life led on a Patagonian estancia, and probably there will be very little variation in it for many years to come. The settlements are so few and far between, on account of the area of land suitable for colonisation being so much scattered, that the country is never likely to be anything more than very sparsely populated; but such settlers as there now are always hope that they will, some day, see better and more rapid means of communication established with the outside world.

VIII.

THE EFFECT OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS ON PROVINCIAL DISTRICTS.

HAVING previously given a short description of the effect produced by the financial crisis upon the city of Buenos Aires, it may be interesting to see what results it has entailed upon the Provinces. A tour through the principal districts of the Republic demonstrates clearly that the country has been shaken most severely, and in a manner that must render a recovery from the blow a long and tedious matter. The first striking instance of this was found on board the Platense steamer by which I travelled up the Uruguay River to the Province of Entre Ríos. There was accommodation for over one hundred first-class passengers, and three years ago it was difficult to obtain a berth unless it was booked beforehand. On this occasion fifteen passengers only were travelling, and careful inquiry elicited the information that this had been the customary state of the traffic for many months past. Under such circumstances, it is not a matter for surprise that the Platense Company, with a really fine fleet of steamers, and commanding the entire waterway of the Plate, should have been forced to go into liquidation.

In Entre Ríos the Saladero work has always been one of the principal industries. It is at these establishments that the dried beef, salted hides, and tallow that leave the Argentine are prepared for export. One of the largest is owned by a Mr. Spangenberg, of Gualeguaychú. I spent a day with him, talking over this particular branch of business, and considering, with his assistance, how far this class of enterprise was affected by the existing state of affairs. This establishment has killed 59,000 head of cattle during the present year. The cost of purchase, preparation for the market, and all charges up to the date of sale come to a total of \$43 currency, on an average, for every beast. The sale price has averaged \$16 gold per head in Buenos Aires. At the existing depreciated value of the paper money this shows a good profit. But Mr. Spangenberg emphatically stated that a sudden heavy fall in the gold premium could not be met by a corresponding reduction in the prices paid for cattle or in the wages account, and that the profits now obtained would become losses unless a high premium continued to prevail. Another cause that has tended to restrict this business during the past two years has been the stoppage of all credit by the National and Provincial Banks. Formerly, these banks would advance money against the purchase of cattle, and they would advise their agents in any particular district to that effect. Now, it is necessary to bring up the cash from Buenos Aires, and hand it over to the various men who are sent out to buy. This, of course, entails an extra risk, and a decrease in the number

of purchases is the result. Inquiries subsequently made in Santa Fé and Buenos Aires confirmed the information I had obtained on this point, and may be accepted as representing the actual state of the Saladeros.

With regard to cereals. It is found that the impossibility of earning a livelihood in the cities has driven an additional section of the population to turn to cultivating the soil. It is important to realise that the depreciated currency has assisted to increase the area under cultivation. Wages have not risen in paper dollars during the last year. Grain, on the other hand, is sold for gold, or the equivalent value in currency. Land has fallen very considerably in value. The result of these three facts is that farmers have sold their crops well, and been enabled to increase the extent of their farms. This is noticeably the case in Entre Ríos and Buenos Aires; in Santa Fé it appears that no great addition has been made to the area under cultivation. The reason given for this is that the best of the land is already growing grain, and that the returns obtained from portions of the remainder that have been tried are not altogether satisfactory. Ten to twelve bushels to the acre on good land is considered an average yield. The cost of cultivation, harvesting, and threshing is about \$40 currency per ton. Here, again, it must be noticed that the profits of the farming are largely dependent on the continued depreciation of the currency. Any great fall in the premium would practically mean a rise in wages to such an extent that much land would be immediately allowed to return to grass.

The stoppage of payment on the part of the banks has undoubtedly prevented many people taking up land for agricultural purposes during the last few months, but it has also had a beneficial effect, in that proprietors of large tracts have been forced into selling off portions at low rates, in order to meet pressing engagements.

In sheep farming, again, the depreciation in the value of the paper dollar has been a distinct source of gain to the estanciero. His wool is gold, and his expenses, so far as all wages are concerned, are in currency. He is, therefore, in the position to-day largely to increase his holding of land on very moderate terms, and in cases where he has confined himself to his legitimate occupation he can afford to wait until the opportunity offers to invest in more stock, or to make a good interest on his money by reselling his land. With cattle and horses the case is different. In both instances the value in paper dollars has decreased during the last two years, and where land was purchased at high prices for this branch of stock raising little or no interest has been obtained on the money so invested.

In Tucuman, where a large number of labourers are employed on the sugar plantations, a considerable increase is found in the cultivated area. This is due in great measure to the fact that wages in paper money have not risen at all during the past two years, while the price of sugar has increased in proportion to the rise in the gold premium. In Mendoza and San Juan the same thing has occurred in connection with the vine-growing. Of course,

both these products are entirely dependent on the protective tariff now in force, and if this were abolished both would be utterly ruined.

So far, then, as the actual cultivation and working of land are concerned, individual interests have only suffered when cash reserves have been held in currency, or profits invested in paper securities. But the consequences later may be very serious indeed. The basis on which present profits are being earned is an absolutely fictitious one. The money of the country, in which all wages are paid, has lost 70 per cent. of the original value it possessed. The suspension of all public works has, for the time being, caused a superabundance of unemployed labour. In consequence of this, the intrinsic value of wages has declined, and to-day the Argentine possesses cheaper labour than any other country in the world where Europeans are employed to do manual work, if the values are computed in gold. It is impossible that such a condition can continue for long. One of two things must happen: either the wage rate will rise or the gold premium will fall far below the present level. If the first occurs then the farmer and estanciero will suffer a reduction of profits unless the currency still further depreciates; if the second should come to pass and paper money assume once more a par value, then only a bare living will be earned. The true effect, therefore, of the financial crisis has been to place the agricultural and the bulk of the pastoral interests, which form the true backbone of the country, in direct opposition to any

measure the Government may propose with a view to reform the currency and endeavour to meet the obligations that have been incurred in Europe. It is impossible to view with equanimity the fact that the interests connected with the land must necessarily be in direct antagonism to those of the creditors of the National and Provincial Governments. Such, however, is now the case, and it is difficult to see how it can be otherwise for many years to come.

Any legislation that effected a sudden conversion of the present rag money to a currency having a par value with gold would practically paralyse all agricultural production — it would very probably have a still more deeply reaching result and end by creating a revolution that would spread over the entire country.

To turn once more to the present condition of the Provinces. In all the towns, such as Rosario, Santa Fé, Paraná, Cordoba, or Mendoza, the present condition of Buenos Aires is reflected with more or less intensity. Tradesmen are suffering severely from the paralysis of all branches of trade. In great part this is due to the fact that the wage-earning class has now no money to spend on anything but the bare necessities of life. The salaries of Government *employés* have declined rather than increased, and this class, which formerly was wont to indulge in extensive *lujo* and show, has now to be content to keep body and soul together, and be glad of a sufficiency for that purpose. So long as the money borrowed in Europe lasted, and the “boom” in land continued, a

spurious activity existed in the provincial towns. One result of this was that they were entirely overbuilt, as is evidenced by the fact that in each one of any size, and especially in Rosario and Cordoba, an enormous number of houses are empty, or only occupied by the proprietors because no tenants can be found. In fact, the Argentines wanted to run before they had learned to walk, and no better example can be found of this than exists in the city of La Plata—a city of huge palaces built by the Provincial Government, and now, to all appearances, almost a deserted town with grass springing up in the empty streets.

With regard to native manufactures, they can hardly be said to exist in the true sense of the word. There are one or two exceptions, notably the Highland Scot Canning Company for preserving and exporting meat, but this has hardly been in existence long enough to enable any sound judgment being formed upon the future position it will occupy—at present the accounts of its progress are far from satisfactory. Of the remainder one of the most important is the Argentine Sugar Refinery in Rosario. This has a Government guarantee of seven per cent., and is entirely dependent on that fact and on the high duties on sugar for its existence. In Cordoba a porcelain manufactory was opened, and this, too, was supported by Government funds, but these fell short some time ago, and the establishment was closed. Local factories for maccaroni and a considerable number of flour mills are found scattered through all the districts;

where wheat is grown. They produce only for local consumption, and cannot be regarded as of any very great importance. The most complete mill that I have seen was at Nogoyá, in Entre Ríos. It was small, but fitted with most elaborate machinery, and lighted throughout by electricity. It has a capacity for turning out five thousand tons of flour yearly. In the course of conversation, the owner, Señor Mohura, stated that he had made money so far out of the financial crisis. He had bought his wheat when the gold premium was at 200 per cent., and in consequence of a subsequent rise, and also on account of the scarcity of grain now in the country, he was enabled to dispose of all the flour he could turn out at the rate of \$250 currency per ton. Factories for making paper, leather goods, and other minor industries also exist in Buenos Aires.

In all cases the Provincial Banks are completely ruined by the depreciation in the paper money. Apart from inefficient management, or other causes that may have contributed to get them into difficulties, this fact alone is sufficient to have made them bankrupt. As an instance, it is only necessary to look at the balance-sheet of the Bank of Entre Ríos for March, 1891. It is shown there that \$6,240,590 33c. gold was sold for \$3,144,902 51c. currency, and that to-day they only allow the same amount in currency as against the gold. Under the heading of "Loans" appears the amount of \$10,290,567 41c. Of this amount it is understood that a very large portion was advanced to the order of the

Provincial Government. The same facts are found in connection with the other Provincial Banks, but the one example is sufficient to show the unsound condition they are in. As a natural sequence, no advances can be obtained from them against crops or other securities, and the result is that many people who possess landed property only have been deterred from breaking up land for the purpose of growing grain under the present advantageous conditions.

Another disturbing factor for Shareholders in railways is the competition offered by carts. If the freight charges are put above a certain level in paper money, it becomes worth while for carts to carry produce to the nearest port, for here once more the question of wages comes in. It is the difference between having to remit gold dividends to Europe and simply employing the money earned to provide a livelihood within the country itself. The increased area under cultivation does not, therefore, mean a better prospect for the various Railway Companies. It will, probably, resolve itself into the unpleasant fact that more cargo will have to be carried and smaller returns obtained—in other words, more work done for less money. Meanwhile the amount of imported merchandise carried to the provinces will show an enormous decrease over late years, as the farming class, who are now profiting by the high prices they obtain for produce, are very chary of spending any money at all on anything but absolute necessities. Moreover, a decrease in the passenger traffic must also be anticipated in consequence of the altered

circumstances of Government officials and commercial travellers and the thousands of other people who, during the temporary wave of prosperity, were constantly passing to and fro between the outlying districts and the various cities and commercial centres. It must be remembered also that the natives of the Argentine do not hold any Shares in the different railways. This is an additional reason why the various Companies cannot expect to meet with entire support from the Government in the matter of being allowed to impose higher tariffs to compensate for the depreciation in the currency.

To sum up briefly, then, the effect of the financial crisis upon the various provincial districts. It will be seen that the depreciation in the value of the paper money has overturned all sound economic conditions which ought to govern the working of the soil. The result of this is to bring the interests of the estancieros and farmers and of the owners of Saladeros and factories into direct antagonism with those of the creditors of the National and Provincial Governments. While an increased area is being put under cultivation the addition cannot be considered as permanent, and the reaction, if a further very heavy fall in the gold premium occurred would be greater than the present increase. Land formerly held in enormous blocks has in many instances passed into the hands of small proprietors. The railways will suffer, and will have proportionately greater expenses for smaller receipts on account of cart competition, consequent on the loss in gold value of the paper dollar.

The Provincial Banks are practically bankrupt, in consequence of having sold their gold when the premium was low and lent the proceeds in paper to the Governments or private individuals, and this fact alone would have caused their insolvency, however well managed in other ways. Wherever public works were undertaken, and required money to carry to completion during the present year, they have been abandoned, or only drag on in a most desultory fashion. Tradesmen have suffered severely, owing to the dearth of any ready money in the various country towns, and because the small farmers who have money will not spend it on anything but the absolute necessities of life. The whole drift of public opinion is in favour of a policy that will assist the landed interest rather than help the European creditor at the expense of the estanciero and landowner. Finally, the number of people driven from the towns to earn a living out of the soil has caused much attention to be directed to the capabilities of the various districts for producing, and this has resulted in showing that a vast portion of the Republic is practically useless for any purposes of agriculture or farming.

The present unsatisfactory condition can only disappear after a lapse of several years. Any attempt at violent alteration would serve no other purpose than to create internal dissensions and disturbances. The remedy lies in the gradual adjustment of the wage rate to the value of the products of the land, and not in legislative measures to regulate the nominal worth of the currency,

or to make it legal tender for the discharge of gold obligations. Meanwhile, it is clearly impossible for the various Provincial Governments to pay interest on the loans they have obtained from Europe; moreover, if the unpaid coupons are allowed to accumulate for a period of three years, as at present proposed, it may be regarded as a moral certainty that they will be still unable to meet the service of their debts at the expiration of the *moratoria*. At the end of ten years matters may have adjusted themselves to a sound basis, but by that time the Bondholders' claims would have gathered in volume to such an extent as to preclude any possible chance of payment in full.

It is essential for those interested in the Argentine Republic to realise that the productive area covers only a small portion of the immense territory comprised by the States forming the Confederation. The Provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fé, Entre Ríos, the southern part of Cordoba, and a section of Corrientes have great pastoral and agricultural resources. Once out of the pale of this riverine zone the producing power ceases. Mendoza and San Juan, with a suitable climate and soil for vine-growing, may be claimed as an exception to this rule, but the extent of cultivation in those provinces is absolutely dependent on the supply of water available for irrigation purposes, and the existing supply is already fully monopolised. In Tucuman the population is supported by the sugar industry, and this is absolutely dependent upon the assistance of the enormously high protective

tariff. The remainder of the Andine Provinces are barren deserts to all intents. Here and there valleys exist where cultivation is found sufficient to supply the very limited local demand. The inhabitants of these regions are, for the most, of Indian extraction with a dash of Spanish blood in their veins. They talk grandiloquently of the mineral wealth that lies buried in the Provinces of La Rioja, Catamarca, Salta, and Jujuy, but every expert who has carefully examined the country for mining purposes has concluded that mineral deposits in payable quantities do not exist, and agrees that this is due to the broken and contorted nature of the geological formation of the eastern slope of the Andes. In the far south the country has yet to be exploited, and it, therefore, cannot be included in calculations of the immediate future.

IX.

PATAGONES AND THE GREAT SALT DEPOSITS.

THE southern portion of the Argentine Republic is still almost *terra incognita* to the inhabitants of Buenos Aires and those living in the older and more settled districts of the riverine provinces. With a view of gaining some trustworthy information about it, I decided to proceed to the Rio Negro, and ride thence to the chain of lakes in the Cordillera of the Andes, the principal of these being Nahuel-Huapi, situated in Argentine territory, close to the Chilian frontier.

With this object, I left Buenos Aires on the evening of the 10th November, 1891, travelling by the Great Southern Railway to Bahia Blanca. Between Buenos Aires and Bahia Blanca the country was looking remarkably promising. The first half of the distance is through somewhat low-lying lands, and in places these were too wet to be altogether satisfactory ; but the stock looked well, and there was abundance of pasture everywhere. The latter part of the journey is through undulating country, and here the heavy rains had been of immense benefit to the grass. In the south of the province the wheat appeared to be rather backward, and

in places it was decidedly patchy, but otherwise fairly healthy, and quite free from any damage from locusts.

I arrived at Bahia Blanca on the evening of the 11th and had intended proceeding thence to Patagones by diligence; being met, however, by very heavy rain, I found that method of transport would be uncertain, and probably mean much delay. I therefore changed my plans to proceeding by a steamer that was leaving the port the next afternoon. In the interval I went a few miles up the extension of the Great Southern from Tres-Arroyos to Bahia Blanca. The contractors have lately handed over this section, and it was to be opened for traffic on the first day of December, 1891. This section finished gives the Great Southern a complete loop line, starting from Buenos Aires, and proceeding *viâ* Tantil and Tres-Arroyos to Bahia Blanca, thence back by Azul and Las Flores to the Plaza Constitucion.

On the afternoon of the 13th I left Bahia Blanca, and arrived off the mouth of the Rio Negro the next evening, but the bar prevented the ship entering that day. At ordinary tides there is only six feet of water at the mouth of the river at low water, and a little over twelve feet at high tides, and this deficiency is a very serious obstacle to the development of the navigation of the Rio Negro, confining it to the use of only very shallow-draught vessels.

Twenty-two miles from the mouth of the river, and where it has a width of about three hundred yards, lies the town of Carmen de Patagones, on the north bank, and exactly opposite on the south bank is Viedma, the latter

the capital of the Rio Negro. The north side of the river is hilly, broken country, and for some distance back from the river the ground is almost pure sand, with little or no vegetation, except a very poor growth of scrub upon it. The south side is flat and very marshy towards the sea but the soil is of the nature of an alluvial deposit from the river, and, if properly worked, would prove very fertile. This, however, would necessitate dyking and ditching on an extensive scale, and could only be effected by an expenditure of capital quite impossible to the present owners of the land. Moreover, to cultivate the ground successfully irrigation would be necessary, as frequent recurrence of long periods of droughts, lasting for four and five months at a time, are constantly and regularly experienced in these districts. At present only cattle and sheep are produced, and no cultivation is attempted beyond a few small *quintas* and gardens. The only other article of export is salt, from the neighbouring Salinas, for the Buenos Aires market.

The town of Patagones is one of the oldest in the Argentine, and it dates back to 1750. It contains some three thousand two hundred inhabitants, and is still under the influence of the priests. In fact, they are the ruling power in the place, and the principal schools are conducted by them. The town is built on the side of a sandhill, and the houses constructed of sun-dried *adobes* or bricks ; altogether, the effect produced is old-fashioned and very Spanish, of the style met with in Andalusia. All the heavy traffic is done by bullock carts, with teams of six

and eight bullocks to each, and the steep sandy roads make it quite necessary to have this number. Patagones has always been the dépôt for the produce of the Rio Negro, and it is here collected to await an opportunity for shipment to Buenos Aires. There are, however, very few signs of any large business having been done in the past, or of any likelihood of such springing up in the immediate future. Communication between Patagones and Viedma is maintained by a service of rowing boats, and for the sum of ten cents currency one is taken across the river and landed in the capital of the Rio Negro. The town contains some fifteen hundred inhabitants, and is the head-quarters of the various official departments. It differs from Carmen de Patagones, insomuch as while the site of that town is hilly, and the streets ankle-deep in sand, in Viedma the land is perfectly flat, and the thoroughfares are a sea of mud in wet weather, and a foot deep in dust when the place is not favoured with rain. The style of building is precisely similar—low one-storeyed houses of brick or mud with flat roofs. Bordering the town, which should more properly be called a settlement, are a few *quintas*, and here and there are small vineyards, but the area in which cultivation is attempted is of a most limited extent. The only trees to be seen are Lombardy poplars and a few walnut, peach, and other fruit trees that are scattered about in various directions.

The climate of the Rio Negro is decidedly healthy; it is dry and bracing, and the heat in summer is far less trying than the damp weather so frequently experienced farther

north. Although lying in latitude 42 degrees south, snow is almost unknown, except in the mountainous regions of the Andes. Indeed, so far, as the question of temperature is concerned, this section of the country is eminently suited for European settlement. Land is fairly reasonable in price, that with frontage on the river being worth from ten to twelve thousand dollars currency a league of six thousand six hundred and seventy acres. On the south bank all kinds of farming might be successfully undertaken, provided that an organised system of irrigation was introduced ; without this, cultivation of the land is impossible. On the north bank, with the accessory of irrigation, the land is well adapted to growing certain classes of vines, and a valuable industry might be created in this direction. But to organise a system of irrigation requires capital, and that, at present, is not available for the development of the resources of these districts.

Another advantage enjoyed by the dwellers in the Rio Negro is tranquility from political agitation. The distance to Buenos Aires is so great, and the means of transport so slow, that very little interest is shown in politics. There is a telegraph, it is true, to the capital, but as a rule it is out of order, and the news, when it reaches Patagones or Viedma, is generally a week old at least.

There is a considerable colony of foreigners in both Viedma and Patagones, principally Italians and Germans ; the former constitute the labouring population, and do the bulk of the manual work that is required. A few of the merchants and a number of the small *tienda* and *fonda*

keepers are of the same nationality. They all appear to be fairly happy and contented, and seem to be prosperous in a small way. The Germans have devoted themselves more to buying produce for export, and to supplying the community with imported articles. Of English people there are only a very limited number—in Patagones I found only five of them resident, and in Viedma only one.

A local company has lately been started to work the deposits of salt that exist some twenty-five miles from Patagones. Their object is to supply the Buenos Aires market, in opposition to the salt imported from Cadiz. The venture appears, so far, to have been successful, and the demand has been greater than the supply, owing, chiefly, to the difficulty the company have encountered in transporting the raw material to the riverside for shipment.

One thing specially strikes the casual visitor to this part of the country, and that is, the number of military officers met with. The explanation of this is that grants of land were made to military men for services rendered in the various expeditions against the Indians, and that, consequently, nearly every Government post is filled by an officer, who prefers a quiet life in the neighbourhood of his own property to being stationed in more civilised Provinces. This also, probably, will be found to be the reason why over one thousand men of the regular Army are located at various posts on the Rio Negro. In former years, no doubt, this was quite necessary as a protection

against Indian raids ; but now there is absolutely nothing to be feared from that source, and the maintenance of such a large military force is a totally unnecessary burden on the revenue of the nation. Fifteen miles above Patagones the river becomes more shallow, and bars across the river are met with where sometimes there is a depth of only some eight feet of water. Communication is maintained as far as Fort Roca, a distance of four hundred and twenty miles, by means of light draught steamers. To journey to that point occupies eight to nine days, on account of the very strong current, which at many spots runs at a rate of over six miles an hour. It is stated that settlements exist throughout the whole space intervening between here and the foot of the Cordillera of the Andes. My intention was to proceed up the Rio Negro in the first steamer, and then strike across on horseback to the chain of lakes, of which Nahuel-Huapi is the best known. I would thus have an opportunity of personally seeing the nature of the country and its adaptability for purposes of European settlement and colonisation. The distance from Patagones to the lakes is stated to be about two hundred and twenty leagues—that is to say, six hundred and sixty miles, more or less.

A wait of four days being unavoidable before the departure of the steamer ascending the Rio Negro, I employed the time in making a tour of some hundred and twenty miles through the country to the north of the town of Carmen de Patagones. The first day I visited the Salt Lakes, some twenty-five miles from the Rio

Negro. They are worthy of notice as being likely to be the means of establishing a flourishing business in the country.

For many years past salt has been obtained from them for local purposes, and various attempts were made to export it to Buenos Aires for general use. It was not, however, regarded with favour by consumers, principally owing to the dirty condition in which it was shipped, and because it was never thoroughly dried or matured. Some three years ago a small syndicate was formed with the idea of improving the method of utilising the large deposits of salt that were known to exist, and, under the title of Enrique Diez Arenas and Company, a concession for a period of sixty years were obtained from the Provincial Government of Buenos Aires, granting to the Company the sole right of exploiting the salt lakes lying between the Rio Negro and the Rio Colorado.

The area covers four deposits of salt, the principal being the Salina Piedras, the Salina Ingles, and the Salina Molina. A limited liability company, known as the Rio Negro Salt Company, was then formed to carry on the work, and the capital subscribed was entirely local, and only amounted to a small sum. Depôts were erected in Patagones and in Buenos Aires, and in the latter place crushing and drying machinery has been put up for the purpose of making fine salt for table and kitchen use. So far the venture has proved fairly successful, and the demand has been greater than the supply, owing to the fact that the means of transport possessed by the Company for

transferring the salt from the Salinas to Patagones for shipment have been very primitive and limited through a want of cash to aid in the development of their property.

The salt-bearing area covered by the four Salinas included in the concession is very large, and cannot be less than twenty thousand acres in extent, but the salt varies very greatly in quality, and that of the Salina Piedras alone has proved thoroughly satisfactory up to the present. The expert's analysis gave the following results:—Sulphate of potash, none ; chloride of sodium, 97·67 ; sulphate of soda, trace ; nitrate of soda, none ; sulphate of lime, 1·72 ; chloride of magnesium, ·09 ; insoluble, ·18 ; water, ·34. This compares favourably with that of the Cadiz salt imported into this country for saladero work, but the latter has for many years had the monopoly of the Buenos Aires market, and naturally some time must elapse before the native product can succeed in ousting it. But already the demand for this native salt is in excess of the capacity for delivery of it.

The Salina Piedras, from which the bulk of the raw material is now obtained, is some 7,680 acres in extent, and is said to contain a practically inexhaustible supply. The lake becomes dry very shortly after the wet weather ceases, and a deposit of some two inches of salt is left over the entire surface. This is removed by shovelling into carts or by loading it into trucks on a light twenty-inch Decauville tramway, and so soon as the salt is cleared away the brine springs bubble up to the surface, and a

fresh deposit is laid. Experience shows that a crop of salt may be taken off every three or four days, the intense dryness of the climate rapidly evaporating the moisture from the brine, which has a density of 25·35. The only interruption to the work is from wet weather, and that rarely occurs in this district. At the time of my visit I saw twenty heaps of salt piled up at the side of the lake, making about 15,000 tons, nearly all of which was fit for the market. The great difficulty at present is transport. The method of working now in vogue necessitates carting the salt to Patagones, a distance of twenty-five miles. Bullocks and mules are employed for this labour, and the long periods of drought and scarcity of pasture in the district make the mortality amongst the animals so employed enormously heavy. To obviate this difficulty, the company proposed to build a light railway to the Bay of San Blas, point twenty-eight miles north-east of the Salina Piedras. The survey has been made for this, and the line set out, but, unfortunately, the present state of affairs in Buenos Aires has prevented the necessary funds from being raised. It is stated, however, that a syndicate in Glasgow has undertaken to find the necessary cash.

The imports of salt into the Argentine from Cadiz average 70,000 tons yearly, and some 2,000 tons of fine salt are also imported. The former pays a duty of 25 per cent. on its value, and the latter three cents gold on each kilo. There is, therefore, a large field for the production of salt in this country, without allowing for Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay as an outlet for any surplus; the

joint importation of those three Republics from Cadiz was, last year, more than 40,000 tons.

I have heard the theory advanced that these salt lakes are directly caused by filtration from deposits of rock salt in the Cordillera of the Andes. I cannot find, however, that this supposition is based on any accurate scientific knowledge or investigation; and, while it may be considered plausible, it must be regarded, at the same time, as purely theoretical. An engineer who was sent down to report on these lakes stated that the amount of salt available at any one time (probably by this was meant season) over the whole area covered by the four Salinas was upwards of 2,000,000 tons. A sample of brine taken from the centre of the Salina Piedras gave the following result when analysed:—Sulphate of potash, trace; chloride of sodium, 24·33; sulphate of soda, 1·08; nitrate of soda, none; sulphate of lime, ·30; chloride of magnesium, 3·61; insoluble, ·01; water, 70·08.

From the salt lakes I travelled on the next day in a northerly direction for some thirty miles, and finally reached an *estancia* belonging to Mr. Mulhall, and managed by Mr. Buckland, a cousin of the late well-known naturalist. This *estancia* is situated close to the Bay of San Blas, where good anchorage exists for shipping, and fair protection is obtained in heavy weather.

The country I passed through during the whole journey from Carmen de Patagones to the salt lake and thence to San Blas was of the same character. The soil is a mixture of sand and gravel, the grass hard and burnt up, the

only other vegetation being a dry scrub, and in no place did I see anything that could be dignified by the name of a tree. The only water available is that obtained by digging wells, and, owing to the undulating nature of the land, it is never very far from the surface in the valleys ; but, unfortunately, this water is often too salt for drinking purposes. Mr. Buckland informed me that he had sunk sixty-seven wells on his *estancia*, and of these only three might be said to be really fit for drinking purposes, the remainder being so brackish that they were practically of no use. He stated that his opinion, formed after twenty-two years' experience of the district, was that the utmost carrying capacity of the land was about 3,000 sheep per square league of 6,670 acres, and that a fair value for the land would be from \$5,000 to \$6,000 currency a league ; he also told me that the climate was well adapted for sheep, but that the long periods of drought that were constantly experienced were a serious drawback to stock-raising in general. Subsequent inquiries made from various people confirmed these statements.

I returned to Patagones by a different route, but found the same class of country ; the only signs of habitation were small *puestos*, built of mud, and occupied by shepherds, or, in some cases, by owners of small flocks of sheep. The land is not fenced at all, and in many instances the owners of small lots of sheep or cattle were simply squatting on land that did not belong to them, and for which they paid no rent. The whole appearance of the district was barren and desolate.

Animal life was conspicuous by its absence, and all that came across my path were a few *martinettas*, a species of large-crested grouse, some partridges, two or three small deer, and a variety of small bright-coloured birds.

X.

THE RIO NEGRO.

BEFORE leaving for my journey up the Rio Negro I gained some particulars as to how the lands along the river were held, and what was considered a fair price for them. It appears that they were originally located under a kind of squatter's right, and that, by a law passed in 1876, the selectors of these lands were permitted to purchase them from the National Government at a nominal price. Subsequently grants of land were made in an indiscriminate manner to officers in the Army for services rendered in campaigns against the Indians; in consequence of this, disputes arose as to the ownership of various blocks, and in 1884 a law was passed ordering that the lands should be surveyed, and the contending claims examined. On the 31st of August of the present year another decree was issued, appointing a Commission to investigate all claims still in dispute, and stating that no titles would be given to land unless satisfactory proof of ownership could be produced; the decree also disallowed any claims to land that might be advanced after the appointment of the Commission. Very few sales of land have taken place

recently, and it is, therefore, somewhat difficult to ascertain accurately what may be the actual present value; recently, however, 5,000 acres of land, close to Viedma, were sold on account of the English Bank, and realised \$9,000 currency. Various other prices were quoted to me, and the average value of land with river frontage seemed to be about \$10,000 to \$12,000 per square league of 6,670 acres—say, two shillings an acre. These river lands are vastly superior to those in the direction of San Blas, and well worth the extra price; moreover, they seem to be cheap when compared with the high prices still asked for land in the northern provinces.

On the 19th I started up the river in a small steamer called *The Limay*, the only vessel at present navigating the waters of the Rio Negro. Three miles from Viedma began a succession of islands, the first being that belonging to Colonel Winter, of the Argentine Army. It was some two thousand acres in extent, and well planted with Lombardy poplars and fruit trees, much of the island being under alfalfa and other kinds of cultivation. From this point onwards we passed a continuous string of smaller low-lying islands of fertile appearance, and with abundance of poplars and thick scrub upon them. Here and there one saw some attempt at cultivation, but only on a very limited scale. Now and then small vineyards were seen, these being owned by Italians, who make a wine called *chocolin* from the grapes. About eight miles from the point of departure there is another large island, belonging to Don Rodriguez Crespo, and here again were

evidence of various kinds of cultivation; but this proved to be almost the last of its kind that was met with.

From this point the river varies very little for the next sixty miles. It winds about in a way that makes the distance by water nearly double what it is by land; the distinctive features are that the north bank rises almost abruptly from the river, and consists of little more than sand hills, covered with scrubby, hard shrubs. On the other hand, the south bank stretches away in a broad expanse of alluvial soil deposited by the river, and consisting of earth washed down from the Cordillera of the Andes when the freshets occur from the melting of the snow in the spring. The water becomes very shallow some twenty miles from Viedma. Crossing some of the bars it was only six to seven feet in depth, and is muddy and turbid, while the strength of the current is never less than five miles an hour, and often as great as seven. Owing to the number of snags and banks, navigation is impossible at night, and the steamer ties up to the bank shortly before dark.

On the morning of the second day the town of Pringles was reached. I have called it a town for the sake of courtesy, but, in reality, it consists of about two hundred houses, built of sun-dried bricks, and in a very tumble-down condition. It dates back, however, to the year 1836, and I was shown two old-fashioned cannon that were used by Rosas in his expedition against the Indians. On the largest of these mud shanties was a grand hatchment with the National Arms upon it, over the doorway, and painted

on it in large gold letters was "Municipalidad de Pringles." Opposite this establishment were the quarters of the garrison; the said garrison consisting of two ragged-looking soldiers of one of the Infantry regiments. Six miles above Pringles, on the north side of the river, is the *estancia* of Messrs. T. and J. Kingcaid. This property is one of the best of its class on the river, and it is the only place at which any attempt has yet been made to improve the breed of native cattle by the introduction of imported blood.

In most cases the *estancieros* of the Rio Negro are content to go on with the Criollo cattle, the native breed of the country. I noticed that the cattle here are bigger in the bone and heavier in every way than the native cattle in the north. The only explanation that can be found for this is in the difference in climate and in the nature of the grasses. There is every reason to suppose that both Durhams and Herefords would prove a success where the native breeds show a superiority over those of the north. The sheep, also, looked healthy and of fair quality, though there is much room for improvement under this head; most of those I saw had a cross of the Rambouillet blood in them.

Soon after passing the Kingcaid *estancia*, the land on the north side of the river flattens out for some distance back, and on both sides is seen an immense area that needs only a system of irrigation to make it capable of producing unlimited crops of cereals. It seems probable, therefore, that European immigration to these districts

would be attended with satisfactory results. At present the number of inhabitants are few and very far between. It is estimated that from Viedma to Lake Nahuel-Huapi, a distance of over 650 miles, the population does not exceed 25,000 souls.

As far as the town of Conesa, some 200 miles by water from Viedma, there is no alteration in the characteristic features of the river. Conesa itself is, practically, a reproduction of Pringles. One striking feature on the journey that I have omitted to mention is the quantity of wild fowl met with. Ducks of all kinds are found, literally, in thousands, the commonest kind being the mallard, a large white-breasted species, with dark back and wings, with a white stripe across the latter, a handsome brown duck with blueish-grey patches on the wings, and any number of teal. In addition, there are the wild goose, the black-necked swan, a great variety of cranes and storks, some snipe, and occasionally a flamingo is seen soaring overhead. On the land numbers of *martinettas*, partridges, and hares are found; so that with water and land combined, there is a big field available for anyone fond of sport. The river does not provide much variety in the shape of fish; there is what the natives call *trucha*, but it is not a true trout, and, moreover, is very tasteless; there are also some small turtle, which are said to be good eating. Beyond these two I did not find any other noticeable species of fish life, except the *pejerey*, which is common to all the Argentine waters. Probably, however, more careful

investigation would bring to light many other objects of interest.

Egypt and the Nile are very familiar to me, and I cannot help drawing a comparison between the state of that river and the Rio Negro. In many of their main characteristics they are very similar in the Rio Negro, as in the Nile, there is immunity from rainfall for many months in the year. In both, we find immense areas of alluvial deposit that requires the aid of irrigation to make the soil give forth its riches. The difference lies in the fact that the one country is thickly populated, whilst the other is almost uninhabited. But the climate of the Rio Negro is admirably suited to Europeans, and in course of time a tide of immigration will fill up the void that now exists. One of the objections I have heard urged against cultivation in the valley of the Rio Negro is that every six or seven years it is subject to inundations, caused by the melting of the snow in the Andes after an unusually severe Winter. I carefully examined the trees on the banks for flood marks, and could only find that the river rose sufficiently to cover the very low lands, and that by far the greater portion would be above high water mark. The climate is dry and healthy, with unlimited sunshine; at the same time, it is temperate, and not subject to regular periods of enervating heat or excessive cold. The one thing necessary is irrigation. To this purpose the river lends itself in every possible way. The fall is so great that a system of canals and dams might be introduced with facility,

and this method could be employed throughout the entire distance between Viedma and Conesa. Or, again, the water could be lifted direct from the river as it is in Upper Egypt.

The day after leaving Conesa for Roca intensely hot weather was experienced, and, simultaneously with this change in the temperature, the Rio Negro began to rise rapidly, and gained from six to eight feet in the course of three days. This was evidently the result of the warm sun being felt in the snow regions of the Andes, and the increased volume of water was occasioned by the melting of the snow that had accumulated at high altitudes during the past winter. Careful inquiries brought to light the fact that, as a general rule, the river does not rise higher than it is at the present time. Such being the case, the cry about these lands being too low and too much subject to inundations for cultivation is quite inaccurate. In very low-lying spots they are too wet for growing grain, but not so for rice, and the bulk of the land is dry enough for the purpose of growing any species of cereals or other crops. The journey up the river is somewhat monotonous, on account of the flatness of the surrounding country and the almost total absence of population. The native gaucho too, is not a very highly interesting individual. Such people as one does see live in mud ranchos of the most primitive kind: their life is a purely animal existence; like their cattle and sheep, they eat and drink, and their only other diversion is to smoke or suck *maté*. I often go into the shanties of these gauchos and have a chat with them. To listen to their talk is almost like going back to

the remote days of one's childhood ; they appear to be as simple as children of five years old in many things, in others they are the greatest scoundrels unhanged. But the darker side of his nature the gaucho carefully keeps to himself when first conversing with a stranger, and it is only when familiarity to some extent breeds contempt that this apparently simple-minded child of nature shows himself to be the perfection of a most unmitigated scamp.

A short distance above Conesa, I had an opportunity of judging how easily land in the Rio Negro valley might be irrigated. I visited a small *chacra*, or farm, of some eighty acres of various kinds of cultivation. To bring the water down to this spot a ditch had been cut from the river at a point some three miles above, and at a place where the height of the bank was just six feet above the water. The fall in the distance of three miles was quite sufficient to allow of a dam being made at the entrance to the *chacra*, and thence the water was distributed over the land. Wheat, maize, and alfalfa were growing, and all three looked remarkably healthy. The whole of the work was on a primitive scale, but it showed effectively what was possible in the future.

The day after leaving Conesa I arrived at the town of Choele Choele. It consists of another collection of mud huts, similar in every way to Pringles. These towns are not unlike the lowest class of village that one meets with in the Soudan, and they have a somewhat Eastern appearance, but lack the local colouring given by the picturesque inhabitants of the Nile.

From Choele Choele there is a *galera*, or diligence, which makes three journeys a month to Puan, a station on the Great Southern Railway. The distance is about seven hundred miles, and the journey occupies six to seven days. The river here has a much greater fall, and the current becomes nothing less than a rapid—indeed, it has more force than many parts of the cataracts of the Nile. In one place the water was running at over seven miles an hour. Close to the town of Choele Choele is the island of the same name; it is twenty-two square leagues in extent, and the bulk of it consists of very rich land. There are a few settlers on it, but up to the present the National Government have granted no titles to the land, and the occupiers are simply there by right of occupation, and possess no legal status as owners of the soil.

Between Choele Choele and Conesa several flights of locusts were met with, and one extended for a distance of more than five miles. The fact that this pest is found in the Valley of the Rio Negro shows how universally distributed it is over the whole Republic. One hears more about the damage done in the north, because there are more crops liable to be destroyed; whilst in this part of the country there is very little else than what Nature provides for these voracious insects to feed upon. One of their favourite articles of diet appears to be the bark of trees, and by stripping this off the trunks and branches they totally destroy nearly all that they come across when they rest in their flights. The inhabitants of the Rio Negro say that it is ten or twelve years since the last

visitation of the kind, and that the probability is that very few will be seen for some time to come after this summer. Two days' journey from Conesa is the *estancia* of Colonel Belleisle of the Argentine Army. The property comprises a magnificent stretch of twenty square leagues of land, and the bulk of this has frontage to the river. There is an enormous house with some six acres of ornamental grounds round it, but the live stock on the *estancia* is mostly of poor quality.

The town of Roca was reached nine days after leaving Carmen de Patagones. This place was originally established in the year 1879 as a military post to protect the lower portions of the river against raids of hostile Indians, and it owes its name to the fact that General Roca commanded the troops delegated to clear the Indians out of the country. It is of some importance as being the headquarters of the military stationed on the frontier, and it has also become to some extent, a centre for the trade of exporting cattle into Chile. It contains some two thousand three hundred inhabitants, and a sprinkling of foreigners, though scarcely any English are found amongst them. A colony was laid out by the Government close to the town, and a small canal constructed for purposes of irrigation; but the *chacras*, with very few exceptions, have never been occupied, and the attempt to introduce immigration by the offer of land at a nominal price proved to be a failure. Roca is in direct communication with Buenos Aires by means of a diligence, which runs three times a month to Puan, on the Great Southern Railway, the journey occu-

pying from eight to nine days, and the distance being about eight hundred miles, the greater part over barren, sandy country.

The similarity of the river to the great waterway of Egypt is demonstrated by the fact that in its whole length it has no tributary of any kind; a short distance above Roca it divides, the river to the south being the Limay, those to the North the Neuquen and Agrio, the Limay rising in the Nahuel-Huapi district. In the Nile there is a precisely analagous formation, the river dividing into the White and the Blue Nile, near Khartoum, and the former rising in Lake Albert Nyanza. Like the Nile, the volume of water increases in its upper portions, and in places between Choele Choele and Roca there are very broad reaches. Throughout this part of the Argentine I have always met with the greatest courtesy and kindness from the native *estancieros*; they not only employ the formal Spanish phrases in which they place their houses at the disposal of a stranger, but they carry out the words in their practical meaning. The *estanciero* must not for a moment be confounded with the *gaucho* already described; the former is the master, the latter the servant.

Up to the present time property on the Rio Negro has paid no taxes of any kind, the exemption being nominally made to encourage immigration and settlement; in reality, the general opinion is that no taxes are levied on account of the large amount of land held by military officers, which produces very little, and would have to be sold if any system of taxation on its value was levied. As a set-

off against exemption from contributions to the revenue, the districts are left, practically, without any organised administration or system of government. As one instance of this one may quote the fact that in the whole distance from Carmen de Patagones to the Chilian frontier only two post-offices exist—one at Roca and one at Choele Choele. At the latter place the postmaster in charge received the munificent salary of fifty dollars per month, in consideration of which income he had to find his own pens and ink, and to devote the whole of his time to the service of the Government—all this for two pounds ten shillings a month! Justice, such as it is, is administered by equally badly-paid *Comisarios* stationed at some seven or eight points in this vast area of territory. Whilst on paper a large military force exists in the Rio Negro and on the frontier, the presence of any military element is very seldom visible to the eye. The reason of this is not far to seek, and the explanation is that the officers in charge of the principal stations have *estancias* in the vicinity, and on these they employ the soldiers as labourers. It is no exaggeration to say that fully two-thirds of the nominal strength quartered in these districts is so employed, and that this has been the case for many years past; it is common knowledge that, with very few exceptions, these men are absolutely ignorant of the rudiments of drill or musketry. The principal occupation of the inhabitants of the Rio Negro is raising cattle for the Chilian market and breeding sheep for wool for export. This latter branch of business is not, however, very important; the number of

sheep is not very great, and they are of the native breed, with only a very slight cross of Rambuillet or Negrete blood in them. The wool is poor in quality, and does not bring more than fifty per cent. of the average price of the Buenos Aires wools. As the breed of sheep improves this will, of course, be altered, but it will take some years to effect the change.

The cattle trade with Chile, on the other hand, has many things in its favour at the present time. The war caused a very much larger demand for meat for general use than was ordinarily the case. In consequence of this, far more beasts were killed than was justified by the annual increase; thus it happens that a large demand exists at the present moment for animals to re-stock the grazing lands in Chile.

On this side of the Andes, and especially in the valley of the Rio Negro, steers can be bought for fourteen dollars currency. The cost of driving these animals over the Cordilleras is about three dollars per head, and at the present moment they are worth in the shipping yards of the southern markets about forty-five dollars each, this price being in Chilian paper, worth about eighteenpence to the dollar. The loss in taking the animals over the Andes is calculated at ten per cent. of the number; but, even allowing it to be very much greater, there still remains a large margin for profit.

Of late years some considerable fortunes have been made by men who devote their whole time to the cattle trade with Chile. But even in this section of business

the evil resulting from the fluctuating nature of the Argentine paper currency is severely felt. One of the largest cattle buyers told me that the recent fall in gold had been a severe blow to him, as he had based all his estimates on a premium of over three hundred per cent., and had entered into various contracts to buy cattle. To do this he had sent the necessary amount of Chilian notes to Buenos Aires to be converted into currency, and this had been done with gold at two hundred and sixty per cent., the result being that he found himself short of several thousand dollars in the amount he had to pay. Occasionally, also, sheep are driven over the Andes for sale in Chile, but up till now the exportation had not been very large.

The two facts that most forcibly impress themselves on a visitor to the Rio Negro are the vast expanse of land, favourably adapted on account of climate and general conditions for agriculture, and the small use to which these great natural advantages have been turned. The reasons why the valley has been so little developed are many and varied. European immigration has nearly always taken Buenos Aires as its point for landing in the country; from that town to the district of the Rio Negro necessitates a journey either by sea or land, the cost of which is quite beyond the means of the bulk of the class of immigrants who come to the Argentine Republic. It must be remembered also that it is only of recent years that any security at all existed in these districts for life and property. Up till the year 1879 the greater portion of the lands were

occupied by Indians, who strongly resented the intrusion of any strangers. The Expedition under General Roca in 1879 altered the whole conditions of the country, by virtually exterminating any power still remaining with the Indian element. But out of this Expedition another evil arose ; the National Government granted enormous areas of land to military officers as a recompense for their services, and this act has proved a serious obstacle and stumbling-block to the establishment of colonies and settlements, the officials being, as a rule, too poor to develop the land adequately, and unwilling to part with it at the nominal price it was valued at. Having to pay no taxes on their property, they were content to keep a few head of cattle or sheep upon it, or else to allow it to lie idle until such time as the overflow of population in Buenos Aires should cause new districts to be sought after and a consequent rise in value to take place. It is quite time now that some steps should be taken by the authorities to alter the existing condition of affairs. A tax levied on the land of the Rio Negro would prove to be for the benefit of the country generally, and add immediately to the revenues of the Government.

XI.

FROM THE RIO NEGRO TO MAGENSHO.

WHEN trying to arrange for the journey onwards from the Rio Negro endless annoyances and vexatious delays appeared. It was necessary to get together a troop of ten or twelve horses to carry myself, my guide, and my baggage. Everywhere I met with a blank refusal to sell, the excuse put forward being that horseflesh was very scarce and there were no surplus animals to spare. Probably this statement was true, as offers of three and four times the ordinary values were futile. Finally, I drifted down to a spot known as Chichinal, and spent a week in an extremely dirty little one-roomed *pulperia*, half drinking shop and half general store, established by an Italian for the purpose of trading with the Indians and the few settlers in the neighbourhood. Even for South America the experience was a curious one. The hut consisted of four mud walls surmounted by a thatched roof. The inside space measured fifteen feet square. A rough counter ran across from side to side and behind this shelves, made out of old packing cases, held a motley assortment of cheap goods precious to the Indian heart. From the rafters supporting the grass roof hung bundles

of boots, tin cans, and other odds and ends. In a corner behind the counter some sacking stretched on two poles did duty for a bed and this was given up to me. My companions were the Italian, a Chilian, and an old Basque, who had fought in Spain for Don Carlos, and who was ever willing to relate his experiences of the war. In the morning a meal of maccaroni and mutton roasted in front of the fire was served out. We sat round an old packing case with the maccaroni dish in the centre; the luxury of plates was dispensed with, a spoon to each person being considered all that was necessary. Forks were unknown, and every man took a chunk of meat in one hand, drew a knife from his belt, and proceeded to cut up and bolt his meat. The mutton bones picked clean were thrown down upon the mud floor for a hungry pack of mongrels to quarrel over, and the repast ended with an unlimited supply of *maté*. Then about noon all hands indulge in a *siesta*, and quietness reigns until late in the afternoon. The evening meal is a repetition of breakfast; so the day passes, and in summer time this routine seldom varies.

Occasionally a few Indians came to the *pulperia* to purchase small articles. They brought guanaco skins, roughly woven saddle cloths and ponchos for sale. These, after long haggling, they disposed of to my Italian friend, and then purchased, at exorbitant rates, the goods they needed. The Indians are harmless and inoffensive creatures. The men of medium height, thick set, with very dark skins and generally unprepossessing appearance. They would sit for an hour in a corner of the hut and

not utter a word, then make some small purchase and depart. It was the women who chiefly brought skins or furs for sale, and in their bargaining they were always good-tempered and pleasant. Their short, squat figures set off with a long blanket hanging from the neck and covering a bright coloured cotton dress were almost picturesque. To add to the charms of their personal appearance they wore pendant from their ears silver plates fully three inches across, and a similar decoration was tied round their necks.

From these Indians I tried to buy horses to continue my journey, but my attempts were of no avail, and after some days of waiting I began to despair of obtaining means of transport. Providentially a man, half Indian half gaucho, came along and agreed to furnish me what I needed. He added that it would be far pleasanter travelling with himself, who was a Christian, than going with an Indian for a guide. For myself I could see but little difference to choose between them. My host explained that a Christian meant a man with Spanish blood in his veins, and the term was used to distinguish from the pure Indian, who was always designated as "*paysano*," and regarded as of lower race.

One afternoon two Indians were squatting on the mud floor in a corner of the hut. They remained so for an hour, maintaining absolute silence. I could not help wondering what opinions they held concerning the march of progress which had deprived them of their lands and left them outcasts on the face of the earth. One of them

looked up suddenly, then grunted to his companion. Both rising, they asked the *bolichero* for more rum. I doubt much whether many of these people care for anything now beyond a liberal supply of liquor.

Life generally on the Rio Negro is taken very easily. On one occasion I complained to my host that it seemed likely several days' delay would occur before I could get horses to continue my journey. The Chileno overheard this, and it called forth the philosophical remark : “*Amigo, el año es largo: qué importe dos o tres días de demora.*”

I left Chichinal on December the 3rd with a troop of eleven horses in company with the “Christian” guide. My baggage consisted of absolute necessaries for myself, weighing some forty pounds, and a similar weight of provisions. The first twenty miles was over sand, the only vegetation being scattered tufts of hard dry grass and a species of furze. Then I descended a deep cañon, and shortly afterwards passed a salt lake of over three miles in length, and about one mile wide. Portions of this were dry, and had a deposit of four inches of pure salt lying on the surface, this being of excellent quality and as clean as if it had been refined. The next fifteen miles was over land devoid of any semblance of grass, but covered in places with scrub. The soil I found to be impregnated with saline matter, rather bitter to the taste, and a deposit of salt lay on the ground like a covering of hoar frost. At the end of some forty miles a small rancho was reached, the sole habitation met with. This spot was situated in

the centre of a chain of small saline lakes, and on the summit of a mound, rising fifty feet above the surrounding country, was a spring of drinkable water, which bubbled up through black peaty soil.

The life led by the small settlers, such as the one at this rancho, is of the most primitive kind. The hut was made of a rude framework of sticks, with hides of animals stretched over them to form walls and roof. The food consisted of ostrich meat, eggs of the same bird, and flesh of the guanaco. The only variation from this diet being occasional meat of *charqui*, or sun-dried beef. Bread is a luxury never seen, and the only drink is the inevitable *maté*. The owner of this residence was the possessor of some twenty head of cattle and a few mares. He told me that for many miles on both sides the land was equally bad and the soil quite as barren of pasture, and that the only reason he had come to live there was on account of the land being free. The circumstance that impressed itself on me during the whole day's journey of forty miles was the total absence of animal life, and I could only attribute it to the fact that over the entire distance no sweet water was obtainable, and that the guanacos, which formerly were plentiful in this particular part of the country, have been hunted down by the Indians to such an extent that they have retreated from all semblance of civilisation.

Next day I was unable to make a start until the afternoon owing to the horses having strayed; nevertheless, some thirty-five miles of country was travelled over. The

whole distance exhibited similar characteristics to the land traversed on the previous day, with the exception that the route lay over continually rising ground. A small lake was passed just before sundown, and this contained water of a salty and very bitter taste, which the horses refused to touch; round the edges of this lagoon was a white powdery deposit of about an inch in depth.

During the day's journey no sweet water was met with, and what was needed for our own consumption we carried in a water-bag made of the skin of the hind leg of a colt. The horses had to go without drinking at all, this frequently happening for twenty-four hours at a stretch when travelling in Patagonia. That night was spent close to a chain of high mountains that intersects the country, and runs from west to east, being probably an offshoot from the Andes.

On December 5th, I made an early start at 4 a.m., and after travelling for four hours reached a deep cañon; following this for twenty miles, we came to a creek of drinkable water, though brackish, and showing traces of sulphur, and with a general taste very similar to Epsom salts, having also a strong purgative effect. Up to this point the soil had been composed of sand and gravel lying on a strata of marl or *tosca*, but from here onwards the nature of the country completely changed. The land began to rise abruptly, traces of volcanic action were visible everywhere, the evidence of scoria and a burnt appearance of the soil attesting to this fact. The formation was red sandstone, alternating with marl, and occa-

sionally an outcropping of white quartz occurred. Now and then fragments of granite were seen lying about, and in one or two places I saw small specimens of flint. The ground continued to be almost pure sand, with a thick layer of loose sharp stones lying on the surface. In such valleys as were crossed a rank reedy vegetation was met with, the soil a black peaty loam, and the earth covered with a white deposit of some saline matter.

The surrounding country was clothed with a dry scrub, principally *mimosa*, and here and there tufts of hard wiry grass. At 8 p.m. I halted for the night near a patch of high pampa grass growing in a gully close to a hole containing fresh water, apparently only existing on account of rain having recently fallen. During the day I had travelled between seventy and eighty miles, but this was the last good work the horses were able to do, their unshod feet having suffered so greatly from the stony ground that they were all more or less in a crippled condition. No sign of animal life was encountered throughout the day, and the only vestige of human life was two deserted Indian *toldos*. In the night heavy rain fell for several hours, rendering sleep impossible, and making one inclined to think that the infernal regions would gladly be accepted as a haven of refuge to escape the misery and wretchedness of passing several hours of the night in a drenching downpour.

When daylight appeared, the rain ceased, and a dense Scotch mist took its place, making progress both slow and difficult. Some ten miles on the nature of the country

changed into rolling grass lands, devoid of scrub, and covered with hard grasses growing in scattered tufts, loose stone lying thickly on the surface in all directions. These same features continued to mark the day's journey, and when the fog lifted in the afternoon we were close to the Sierras, known as Quepunyo. During the night a sharp frost set in, and this was followed on the morning of the 7th by thick fog for a couple of hours. On that day, after four hours' riding over rapidly-rising ground, we arrived at a small Indian encampment, and I was able to obtain some information with regard to the general characteristics of the neighbourhood. My informant stated that in winter it was impossible to live in these mountains on account of the snow, which lay on the ground to a depth of two to three feet, and covered up the pastures to such an extent that the horses could get nothing to eat.

The country for fifty leagues on either side was similar to that which we had just past over, but for some distance to the south it was still more barren. The Indians in winter migrate to much lower altitudes where the cold was far less severe, their object in coming up to the mountains in summer being to hunt guanaco and ostrich, for the sake of the skins and feathers. These they take down to the Rio Negro for sale, and with the proceeds purchased what they needed from the *boliche*s on the river side. In hunting, they run the game with dogs, and use the *bolas*, both for guanaco and ostrich, and their method is to gallop these down, and then throw the *bolas* so that they become entangled round the legs of the animal they are chasing.

This was the first Indian encampment I had met with, and the feeling it aroused was one of intense disappointment. One's ideas of such people are, naturally, to some extent, founded on the accounts read of in fiction, but the reality destroys all the charm and romance. The *toldo* of fact consists of a few sticks stuck in the ground; on these, guanaco skins are stretched in such a way as to form some protection against the weather on three sides, the fourth being quite open. Inside this edifice the occupants live in a state of dirt and filth that would be very hard to equal, dogs and human beings alike sharing the interior. An Indian rarely, if ever, washes himself, and one of them told me that they did not consider it a healthy thing to do. Their food consists entirely of guanaco or ostrich meat and *yerba*, and when they possess any cattle they occasionally have fresh milk.

The one idea they tenaciously cling to as regard the foreigner is that he is an individual from whom something can be obtained, and their invariable custom is to beg small gifts from him. I was asked for *yerba*, biscuits, and sugar, before I left, and it only required time to have allowed for demands being made on everything I had with me.

From here there was a steep pull of some twenty miles up to the summit of the range, where we found a long stretch of table-land, in which a slaty formation cropped up to the surface; then a precipitous descent of eight hundred feet brought us to rolling country, the vegetation being tufts of hard grass, with very little scrub of

any sort. That night our camp was opposite the first of a series of lagoons of salt water, which lie along the foot of a ridge known as the Sierra Cunilleo. During the day various herds of guanaco were passed, but they were generally out of shot, and with unshod horses it was impossible to go after them over the loose stone and rocks. Flights of locusts were met with everywhere, even on the summit of the range, where sharp frosts occur nearly every night; all day long, too, we were pestered with a kind of gad-fly, called here *tábanas*.

On the 8th December, the whole day, from 5 a.m. till 7.30 p.m., was spent in crossing undulating country that was a desert. The soil was gravel and sand on a strata of red sandstone, and with small sharp stones lying on the surface, making travelling painful and difficult for the horses. The day's journey covered some thirty-five miles, and the whole extent was dotted with small salt lagoons, but no fresh water was obtainable until in the evening a second range of mountains was reached, and there we found a fine stream flowing in one of the valleys. Here there were duck, teal, and wild geese, and several other species of birds. Early the next morning another encampment of Indians was encountered: they differed in no way from the former one, and were living in precisely the same manner. They had a fine collection of guanaco skins and ostrich feathers, and said that there was any quantity of game in the neighbourhood.

We stayed chatting with these people for an hour, and received directions as to the road. Half-a-mile from this

camp my Christian guide mistook the way, and signalled to the Indians to send someone to us. Two men jumped on their horses and galloped at racing speed towards us. As they approached, I saw they were riding bare-backed, and with bridles that were only a loop round the necks of the horses, tied to the lower jaw by a bit of raw hide passed behind the back of the teeth. They sat their half-broken horses with wonderful grace and ease, and the absence of a saddle appeared to concern them not at all.

During the previous day an odd experience had befallen me. My troop of horses could make but little progress on account of their tender feet. The one I rode was sound and fresh, and, leaving the guide to conduct the baggage and animals to the foot of a distant mountain, I rode off to the right of the direction we were travelling in. For three hours all went well. Then my horse became tired, laid down and refused to move. I lit a fire so that the smoke should show my position, and let it be known I wanted another horse. In ten minutes I counted seven different columns of smoke rising from the surrounding hills, indicating the presence of as many groups of Indians. As is their custom, they answered the signal; yet it was only on very rare occasions one encountered these people.

From here onwards we crossed a succession of deep cañons, intersecting a rocky barren country, but with springs of good water in most of the valleys. The stratification was much the same as on the previous day, but

with more slate on the ridges, and the soil quite free from any appearance of salt. The variety of wild flowers over this part of the country was a very noticeable feature ; they comprised seven different kinds of cactus, a species of vetch, quantities of daisies, a plant resembling stephanotis in both flower and scent, many most brilliantly-flowering shrubs, and various sorts of bulb orchis. The pasture, however, was scanty and poor, and of no practical value for stock-feeding purposes. In several of the streams I looked carefully to see if anything existed in the shape of fish-life, but could see no sign of any, and the only living things in the water were frogs and tadpoles.

On the morning of the 10th I arrived at Magensho, and found the principal *estancia* of the South Argentine Land Company located in an extensive valley, which had a small river running through it. There is a marked change in the country in this neighbourhood, and it is less cut up by the huge rocky cañons so continually met with during the last week's travel. The land appears to be more suitable to sheep farming than any other purpose, and it is chiefly to that use that it has been applied up to the present date, the lands nearer the Andes being reserved for cattle and horses. Altogether the Company owns three hundred square leagues of land, equal to about two millions of acres, but very little has been done towards developing this immense area. A large proportion of it near the steppes of the Andes is much broken up by rocky barren hills, but in the valleys, of which there are a con-

siderable extent, good soil and land, free from stone, exists, and this is especially the case in the neighbourhood of Magensho. At the present time brick and stone buildings are being erected for the head *estancia*, and stations being formed in various other parts.

XII.

IN THE CENTRE OF PATAGONIA.

AT Magensho I succeeded in obtaining some mules, and on the 15th of December left that place in company with a train of pack animals carrying provisions to Fo-Fo-Cahuel, another branch of the Land Company. In charge of the stores and animals was an extraordinary old man, a native of San Juan. He had a habit of talking to himself all day, and rarely addressed anyone. One morning whilst getting the mules ready for a start I heard him philosophising with the remark that "if it was only necessary to tie a pack on a mule's back, everyone would be a packman, but that it required much experience to do it properly." I found out the truth of this during my travels, and my baggage was an endless trouble to me whenever I happened to have men who did not thoroughly understand how to load it.

There were two other men with me, both Indians; one of these helped to drive the mules, and the other led the bell mare for them to follow. This latter was an odd character; he had on a soldier's coat, and was wearing various other parts of a military outfit. He told me he

had stolen these from some soldiers, and said that he managed to obtain an entire kit, but had lost most of it. He added that he wished he could meet some more soldiers, as then he would be able to steal another lot from them. The idea never seemed to enter his head that there was anything wrong in this proceeding, and rather it appeared in the light of a Heaven-sent blessing that such a theft was occasionally possible. Progress with this mule train was slow, and we seldom covered more than ten or twelve leagues a day.

From Magensho the route lay in a south-westerly direction, and followed the course of a small river for some fifteen miles. The valley was about a mile wide, and in places contained fair grasses, but the soil was wet and cold, and sometimes boggy ; where the land was not swampy it was of a light sandy nature. On both sides of the valley were barren ridges, covered with broken stone, and devoid of any vegetation, with the exception of dry scrub some eighteen inches high. On the river were plenty of duck and geese, a few small snipe, and some spur-winged plover.

The next twenty miles was across undulating country of loose sand mixed with stones, and intersected at intervals with ridges of hills of marl and red sandstone. We then crossed a plain about three miles wide, the surface of which showed traces of alkaline and salty matter ; on the north side of this was a small lake of brackish water, and here a number of flamingoes were disporting themselves. A few miles further was an Indian encamp-

ment, consisting of four *toldos*, and containing some women and children, who stated that the men were away hunting guanaco in the neighbourhood. Five miles beyond this the track descended into a narrow valley, in which were holes containing water of a slightly brackish taste with traces of sulphur in it. Throughout this stretch of country the grass was all of a hard dry character, growing in scattered tufts, and of very little use for grazing purposes ; here and there in the valleys were patches of better pasture, but they covered such a limited area as to be of small value for ranching purposes.

The succeeding twenty miles lay through mountainous country, the track passing from one ravine to another and avoiding the ridges as much as possible. The soil was saturated with alkaline matter, the vegetation sparse even in the valleys, and the hills quite barren but for a little scrub dotted about on them. The only signs of habitation were one solitary cluster of deserted *toldos*; near these I found veins of white quartz lying in red sandstone, and there were faint traces of silver or copper. In the same vicinity deposits of limestone showed on the surface. At this point, again, the water had traces of some mineral deposit in it. From here, for some forty miles, the route passed through rolling land, broken repeatedly by high rocky ridges of mountains. On the higher lands the scrub disappeared, and in place of it were tufts of dry and rather bitter grass. In the valleys the soil was saturated with alkaline matter, and contained no pasture fit for animals to feed on. Small salt lakes were dotted over the country,

and in the ravines holes full of fresh water were constantly met with ; these, apparently, being the result of heavy rains, and not to be depended upon in dry weather.

We camped on the fourth evening at the foot of a small valley, and the land round about us was white with salt ; near our resting place were five mounds, each about ten feet high, and bubbling out of the top of each one was a spring of perfectly fresh water. These springs are often seen in the lands lying at the foot of the Andes, and they seem to be due to volcanic action ; it is impossible to find any bottom to them, and any animal falling into one is unable to extricate itself, every attempt to do so only breaks down portions of the sides. The Indians call these spots *minukas*, but I could obtain no information of any kind as regards their origin. In the vicinity I noticed granite mixed with sandstone on the tops of the ridges, and everywhere could be seen traces of volcanic action on the rocks and soil.

Fifteen miles more through the same class of country brought us to the highest point between Magensho and Fo-Fo-Cahuel. After having been steadily rising for one hundred and twenty miles we now began to gradually descend, and a few hours' travelling brought us to a saline plain, some ten miles in width. Up to this point the formation had been uniformly loose sand, red sandstone, and marl ; now it began to change, and the plain contained in places, a sort of greasy clay. The track passed close by a lake of salt of considerable dimensions ; along the shores were traces of an Indian encampment, and here

and there some piles of salt had been scraped together, evidently intended for use.

From this salt plain we crossed over several ridges of gravelly sand, and then into a fair-sized valley, but with very little grass or pasture of any kind in it. This gradually narrowed down until it entered a deep cañon, the sides of which towered up nearly a thousand feet high, composed chiefly of granite and loose rubble, and continuing for a distance of seven or eight miles. The scenic effect of these huge granite walls was truly grand, while overhead an occasional condor soared through the sky. At the mouth of this cañon was a spring of water, rising through black greasy soil, and with oil, bearing a great similarity to crude petroleum, both in smell and appearance, lying on the surface. After leaving this cañon the Rio Chico, a small insignificant stream was reached, and here were the first trees that I had set eyes on since the Rio Negro; they were only a stunted species of willow, but were a feast for the eyes after having passed so many weary miles without seeing anything more than miserably stunted scrub. After following the valley of the Rio Chico for some distance we struck across ridges of gravel, and then crossed the Rio Medio; then over more barren ridges, covered with cactus plants, and, finally, descended into the valley of the Rio Chubut and reached Fo-Fo-Cahuel, where the Argentine Southern Land Company has a small station, consisting of a few ranchos.

The distance from Magensho was nearly two hundred miles, and the journey had occupied six days. On three

nights heavy rain had been met with, the remaining two being bitterly cold with severe frosts. On one day, in addition to heavy rain, it hailed continuously for over two hours, and left the surrounding country with the appearance of being covered with snow. In the daytime the heat of the sun was intense when it did not rain or hail, and it would be impossible to find a more changeable climate than was comprised within the compass of that week. Even with thick English winter clothing I often felt the cold severely, and how the Indian boys managed to exist in nothing but thin cotton shirts and trousers was a mystery ; the only other covering they had was their pouchos, and those were frequently wet through. The only human beings encountered during the six days were the one small encampment of Indians, and the sole semblance of civilised life that crossed my path was a sheet of "The Graphic" lying beside one of the water-holes, where a survey party had camped some months previously. The general impression I formed was that the land suitable for settlement must be extremely limited in the district I passed over, and lies only in small patches. The journey was uneventful, and the monotony was broken only by a gallop after guanaco or ostrich.

The Company's land at Fo-Fo-Cahuel takes in a portion of the valley of the Chubut River ; here they have a fine stretch of flat land, and this may prove to be adapted to farming purposes. I saw about a quarter-of-an-acre of wheat, and the same quantity of alfalfa, and both looked healthy. There are fifteen hundred cows on this section,

and they seemed prospering. Two men are in charge of the place, one a North American, the other a Scotchman. Both appeared to spend most of their time in doing nothing. They were living in a mud hut a few yards away from the river, and, although they had been stationed there for some years, they had neither table or chair in the rancho. The Rio Chubut is here about twenty yards wide, and some three feet in depth. On the banks are willows and smaller trees called *chacay*. In the river abundance of trout and other kinds of fish. From what I could gather it appears that the winter at this place is not so severe as at Magensho, and that the live stock suffer far less from the effects of it.

After a rest for one day, I left Fo-Fo-Cahuel on the 22nd of December and proceeded up the valley of the Rio Chubut for ten leagues, then struck across to the valley of a stream called the Leleik, a further distance of about fifteen miles. All along the Rio Chubut is fair land, but it narrows down to a small strip towards the head of the river, and the hills on either side are barren, sandy, and worthless. Shortly before leaving the valley I obtained a view of the snow-clad ranges of the Cordilleras, where the stream takes its rise, this being about fifty miles above the juncture with the Leleik.

The land at Leleik struck me as being the best I had seen since leaving the Rio Negro. It is much higher and dryer than the lands on the Chubut, and the hills surrounding the valley have good pasture upon them. The position is sheltered from the heavy westerly gales

by a high range of mountains, the sides of which are clothed with heavy forest, amongst the trees being abundance of Cypress. The bottom of the valley is one mass of strawberry vines, and I found quantities of ripe fruit. These are smaller than the European cultivated variety, but of much the same shape and flavour, and not in any way resembling the Alpine strawberry. Along the creeks, wild black currants grow in profusion, and also a species of parsnip. The soil a rich black loam in the valley, on the hills a light loam mixed with sand lying on a yellow sandstone and marl formation. On the hills were numbers of ostriches and guanacos, and I counted over eighty in one herd of the latter. I pushed on for another five leagues to the head of the Leleik valley, found the land of the same class, and then returned to the spot where the Land Company have put up a small rancho. Here was a *capataz*, who had in his charge fourteen hundred head of cattle and a few brood mares. This stock looked well, and certainly compared most favourably with any other that I had yet seen in this part of the country. There can be no doubt that the land at Leleik and the valley at Fo-Fo-Cahuel are both well adapted for raising live stock. Portions of the land, too, are suitable for agriculture, but not to a sufficient extent to justify the construction of a railway to carry away the produce, and it must be remembered that the district in question is many hundred miles distant from the seaboard on the Argentine side, and inaccessible on account of the Cordillera of the Andes on the Chilian.

"It is a far cry to Loch Awe," and a long interval must elapse before the population is large enough to create a local demand for agricultural produce; eventually a certain number of settlers will assuredly find their way into this part of the south, and to supply what they need for their consumption annually, the portions of land suitable for cultivation at Leleik and the upper valleys of the Rio Chubut will be made use of.

I returned to Fo-Fo-Cahuel on December 24th, and rested there for a few days whilst making arrangements for fresh horses. On the 26th I made another start and followed the course of the Rio Medio for fifteen miles, travelling in a north-westerly direction, and so gradually working along the foot of the Cordillera. I then struck out into another valley, running in a more northerly direction, and continued travelling through this for about forty-five miles until reaching the head of it, and found there an Indian encampment, in which were some eight or ten *toldos*. Throughout the entire length the soil of the last valley was fertile, and produced good pasture. The whole of this area is still owned by the National Government. From the head of the valley an old Indian trail led direct to Nahuel-Huapi. The route lay across high, barren, table lands, broken at intervals by deep *cañones*, in nearly all of which were streams of water and patches of fair pasturage, but both valleys and table lands were devoid of any vestige of timber, and it was impossible to even find enough wood to make a fire except by searching in the beds of the creeks for drift-

wood that had been washed down from the mountains. There is little alteration in the character of the country until within a few miles of Nahuel-Huapi, and then the land becomes more broken, and finally the track decending precipitously we entered the valley in which the lake lies. Here was another station of the Southern Land Company, and two huts, in which representatives were located. My journey from Fo-Fo-Cahuel had occupied three days, and the distance about one hundred and thirty miles. Very few objects of interest were met with on the road, the most noticeable one being that on the second day I came across a herd of guanacos in which I counted between two hundred and fifty and sixty. On the same day I saw numbers of large hares: one of them I shot, and it turned the scale at twenty-two pounds. Just before entering the valley of Nahuel-Huapi, a full view of the lake opened out and it was a truly magnificent sight to see the vast expanse of water dotted over with forest clad islands, surrounded on three sides by the snow-covered ranges of the Cordillera, rising, apparently, straight up from the water's edge, and towering high above it.

It was the 28th December when I arrived at Nahuel-Huapi, and I spent a week carefully examining the surroundings. The name of the lake is an Indian one, and means Lion Grass, being probably derived from the fact that the grass in the vicinity grows chiefly in high and strong bunches. Nahuel-Huapi is the centre and largest of a group of lakes, laying partly in Argentina and partly in Chile. On the north and south are two

smaller ones, each being connected with Nahuel-Huapi by rivers, but they have not, as yet, been named. On the Chilian side there are the lakes of Todos Santos, Puyehüe, Rupanco, Ranco, and Llanquihue. At the second and third of these are hot mineral springs, and there are evidences, in the shape of bathing places hewn out of the rock, to lead one to believe that use was made of them by the old Spaniards.

From the north-west corner of Lake Nahuel-Huapi, the Rio Limay runs out in a narrow, deep, and very swift stream; this waterway is usually said to be impassable on account of the Villarino Rapids, these occurring about ninety miles above the junction with the Rio Negro. The Limay is the only outlet for the waters. The lake is nearly fifty miles long from east to west, and, in some places, over twenty miles wide from north to south. The land adjoining the water is generally of good quality: in the open grass lands the soil is sandy, with patches of black loam here and there; in the timbered country it is a deep rich-black loam, with a layer of vegetable mould on the surface. Abundance of good timber, amongst which the cypress predominates, covers the south, west, and north sides. At the eastern end of the lake there are numerous traces of abandoned settlements, and proofs that the land had been cultivated. On enquiry, it turned out that, some sixty years ago, both Indians and people from Chile had been located here, but had left the district on account of troubles arising with the Argentines.

On the largest of the islands are the ruins of a church,

and tradition holds that the headquarters of an important Jesuit mission settlement were located here at the close of the last century. Accurate information on the subject was not, however, available.

For many miles round about, intermingled with the grass, were strawberry vines growing in profusion, and, in places, these were loaded with ripe fruit. Much of the vegetation was similar to that found in England ; amongst the wild flowers were daffodils, daisies, dandelions, mustard, white and purple heather, marigolds, calceolarias, and innumerable flowering shrubs. Apple trees and currant bushes, both loaded with fruit, were scattered in clumps over the country. In fact, there was every indication that farming, of certain descriptions, might be undertaken with a fair prospect of success, provided that a market was available for the disposal of the crops. The Southern Land Company have a frontage of twelve miles to the lake.

It was the beginning of summer at the time of my visit, and the weather if anything somewhat colder than usually is the case in England in the month of June ; on most days there was a bright sun, but this was accompanied by strong westerly gales of wind, and these, blowing across the snow-clad Cordillera, gave a chill feeling to the atmosphere, especially during the nights. All the trees showed that the prevailing winds were westerly, but it was only on the eastern side of the lake that the foliage appeared to suffer, and even there, in the most exposed places, no serious harm was effected.

The only persons located near the lake were the repre-

sentatives of the Argentine Southern Land Company, a Texan, who was renting land from a German Company on the north side of the Rio Limay, and a German, who had taken up a small patch of land with a view to farming. This latter had planted a garden of common European vegetables, and these looked well and luxuriantly flourishing. Locusts had, however, visited the district and done some damage to the younger plants, and entirely destroyed a patch of maize. With regard to this pest, the lake presented a very extraordinary sight: along the edge of the entire length of it was a strip of dead locusts, two feet wide and fifteen inches deep; they were lying just above the water line, and had evidently been washed up by the waves during the heavy gales, and had fallen into the water while endeavouring to cross from side to side.

In the future, it is probable that the timber lining the shores of Lake Nahuel-Huapi may become an important factor in the markets of Buenos Aires. The Rio Limay presents no real difficulties to prevent rafts being floated down to the Rio Negro, and thence there is a perfectly clear waterway to the seaboard. Good timber is available, and there are large quantities of what I have termed cypress. The native name for this wood is *cypresa*, but in appearance of foliage and grain it closely resembles a white cedar, and is, undoubtedly, a valuable timber. At present, Buenos Aires draws nearly all its supply of wood for building purposes from the North American forests. A few hundred pounds spent in blasting out the rocks in the Villarino Rapids on the Limay, will open up a water-

way to the vast forest of the Andes, and thus render the country independent of outside supplies. Already rafts of timber have been floated down from Nahuel-Huapi, and there are indications that, ere long, this industry will be vigorously and practically exploited.

The opening up of the timber trade will necessarily bring settlers to the district ; these will, primarily, take up the land on the shores of the lake, and farms will be made. But it must be considered doubtful if cereals can be profitably cultivated. During my stay two severe frosts occurred, and this at a time when wheat would be forming into ear. They were sufficiently severe to have destroyed completely any grain crop in such a critical stage of growth. On the other hand, there are no great extremes of heat or cold, and the majority of all kinds of European trees, fruits, and vegetables, would flourish to perfection. Once the road through to the Chile side of the Andes is opened, population will slowly drift over from the district of which Ozorno is the centre. This part of Chile is stated to contain over seventy thousand inhabitants, the German element being very large. Even now the Ozorno lands are nearly all occupied by farmers and owners of live stock, and an outlet is being looked for to provide for the surplus population. Nahuel-Huapi is one of the points to which this surplus will drift, and so, in time, the nucleus of a population will be formed.

Nahuel-Huapi provides a very poor field for a sportsman. Round the lake are neither guanaco or ostrich, though I heard of one white specimen of the latter having

been seen. Fifty miles to the south, however, abundance of both may be found. A few painted snipe, a fair number of the common kind, an occasional flight of ducks, and some curlew, made up the list of game. There is also a species of the amadillo, called by the natives *peche*, that is excellent eating, and has a flesh very similar to pork. Different kinds of the same creature are found in nearly all parts of the Argentine, and are everywhere esteemed a delicacy. In the forests are numbers of South American lions, but it was not my luck to come across one, although the Indians showed me skins of those they had killed.

It has been said that Patagonia is rich in gold, and I enquired carefully to ascertain the amount of truth contained in these statements. It is certain that in the south there is gold, both alluvial and in quartz, but it appears to be in only small quantities. When at Fo-Fo-Cahuel, I met two American miners who had spent a year prospecting the Chubut River and the lands south of that point. They had not met with any great success, but found traces of both gold and silver in various districts. In places, they said, sufficient of the former metal existed to render working with hydraulic power, and sluicing, a profitable undertaking. The specimens of gold these men showed me were of good quality, but whether they were obtained in Patagonia, or brought from the United States, I am unable to say. Deposits of nitrate of soda are also known to exist near the Straits of Magellan, and I have seen specimens of them; these contained, however, a percentage of chloride, in addition to the nitrate.

XIII.

LAKE NAHUEL-HUAPI AND THE ANDES.

MY object was to travel to the western point of the lake, then cross over the Cordillera of the Andes and make the best of my way to the nearest seaport in Chile. With this end in view, on 12th January, 1892, I swam my horses over the Rio Limay, and crossed myself and my party, consisting of an Indian boy and a Chilote, in a canoe constructed by hollowing out the trunk of a tree. My progress that day, however, was very small; the rain fell in torrents, and was accompanied by a fierce westerly gale, making travelling almost an impossibility. Five miles from the Rio Limay, along the north side of the lake, brought me to the spot occupied by the Texan, who had been located there for over a year, and possessed a head of some two thousand herd of cattle. I found this gentleman living in a tent, and willingly accepted his invitation to avail myself of its shelter for the night. The land in the vicinity was of the same character as on the opposite side of the Limay, but better pasturage and the cattle were fatter; amongst the stock were some polled Angus: these were in a very thriving condition, and they appeared well suited to both climate and surroundings.

My host, when talking about the pampa lands in the neighbourhood, compared the country to Wyoming, U.S.A., and stated that it was precisely similar, with the exception that the winters at Nahuel-Huapi were very much milder.

Early next morning I started to make my way along the north shore of the lake. For the first twelve miles the route carried me over grass hills, intersected at intervals by narrow valleys, with steep land running down to the edge of the water. I then crossed the neck of a peninsula jutting out into the lake for some ten miles, and then left the open grass lands behind me and entered into dense forest. Here the real difficulties of the journey began to make themselves apparent. The road was nothing more than a disused Indian trail, and it was necessary, in many places, to cut a passage through the thick undergrowth to allow the horses to pass. The advance was continually barred by steep ridges and deep ravines. Down these the horses had to slide and roll as best they could, and then climb like cats up to the top of the next ridge. We toiled on for four hours in this way, and then halted for the night in a small open patch of grass intermingled with wild peas.

The vegetation passed through during the day had been most luxuriant. Fuchsias on all sides, not the small garden plant seen in England, but trees fully thirty feet high; they were in full blossom and very beautiful to see. Amongst the forest trees were cypress, silver and common beech, and a species of birch. Wherever an opening

occurred to let in the sun, the ground was covered with strawberry vines, and black currant bushes, both loaded with ripe fruit, and, at intervals, rhododendron bushes in full bloom were met with. In the middle of the day the rain ceased, and a bright sun lit up the landscape; every now and then as we toiled through the network of tangled undergrowth, a spot was reached commanding a view of the lake. It was truly magnificent. The water was a deep intense blue, on all sides the forest stretched to the water's edge, and above this again was a setting of snow clad hills. The bright sunshine playing over the scene gave to the whole a rarely beautiful effect. It was Maggiore, Como, and Lucerne reduced into one compass.

The next day's journey was a long one, and covered over thirty miles. To avoid the thick undergrowth and steep hills we kept down near the edge of the lake; to do this it was necessary at times to travel actually in the water, and this reached up to the knees of the horses, even so it was preferable to cutting a road through the thick jungle. The vegetation varied very little from the previous day, but with the addition of many kinds of ferns, amongst which were the Maiden Hair and Bracken. The soil near the water looked wonderfully fertile; it was a deep rich vegetable mould, occasionally stony ridges cropping up to the surface. The only fresh species of trees I encountered that day were the common Box; but, instead of a shrub, it was a tree between fifty and sixty feet high, and it appeared to be very abundant. From time to time we crossed creeks and streams that came rushing

down from the mountains to empty themselves into the lake.

On the third day it was necessary to again travel almost entirely through the forest, as the shore of the lake became broken and rocky, and made the passage impossible for horses. The route became very difficult, and was almost entirely stopped with brakes of a cane, called *Quila*, resembling Malacca, but with the joints very much closer. Through this we worked all the morning, and at mid-day reached a deep river, which was over fifty yards wide, and with a very strong current. Here we wasted three hours in constructing a raft of logs, and on this we crossed ourselves and our baggage, having previously made the horses swim over to the opposite bank. As it was, we very nearly lost the baggage; the current carried raft and occupants well out into the lake, and the logs, which were only tied together with a lasso of cowhide, began to show an inclination to part company; happily, however, our united exertions succeeded in bringing this primitive conveyance into shallow water, and we landed safely on the other side of the river. I followed this stream for about a mile, and found it was the overflow from another lake, long and narrow and running in a northerly direction. It was connected with Nahuel-Huapi by the river we had just crossed, and this appeared to be the only outlet for its waters. It is not shown on the map, and so very little can be known about it.

The next ten miles were full of difficulty. We forced our way over a succession of steep, slippery ridges, and

through swampy gorges, where canes and thick under-growth impeded the horses at every step. In this part I noticed holly bushes growing in the forest, generally in places where the timber was heavy. That evening we reached the northern arm of the lake, which, at the Chile end, spreads out into the form of a cross. On the summit of one of the ridges that we had climbed over during the day I came to a spot where indications of a rough hut appeared ; close by a cross was carved on a giant of the forest ; from the appearance of both many years must have elapsed since they were placed there. The cross was the usual signal that some poor devil had found his last resting place.

That evening I camped where a small patch of grass gave feed for the horses ; this was some two hundred feet above the lake, and in the night a curious picture showed itself. The moon was almost full, and shining brightly over the landscape. I was looking down on the lake about midnight, when suddenly clouds began to roll down the ravines on either side of my camp ; slowly they spread up all the valleys and completely covered the surrounding country, leaving only the spot I was camped on, the lake and the ridges of the hills exposed to view. It was a weird uncanny sight, and, yet, the scenic effect was very wonderful, and this was heightened by the play of the moonlight on the waters.

On the fourth day I struck across a succession of steep ridges to reach the point of the western area of the lake. This we succeeded in doing after a six hours' march, and

without further mishap than that one of the pack horses missed his footing and rolled down a ravine for a hundred and fifty feet and was badly hurt.

At the point of the lake I found good food for the horses, and an expanse of some ten thousand acres of flat and sparsely timbered land. Here, also, was another river which needed swimming; instead of building a raft, I made my two boys swim the horses over, and with each trip take a portion of the baggage until it had all been safely crossed. Quite close to the spot on which our camp was pitched was a small peninsula, the edges of which were simply alive with a species of teal and other water-fowl. That afternoon I went for a swim in the lake, but found the water so icy cold, probably on account of the fact that the waters which run into it are nothing but melted snow, that I was glad to get out of it. Sleep that night was made impossible by the myriads of mosquitos that appeared at sunset.

Next day we reached the foot of the pass through the Cordillera in a journey of two hours' duration in which we passed another smaller lake, and then for more than an hour followed the bed of a stream flowing down the middle of the pass. At mid-day we crossed the centre of the rocky ridge which forms the boundary between Chile and Argentina, and at this point was one of the most wonderful bits of scenery encountered throughout the whole journey. The pass goes between two walls of granite, these being fully five hundred feet high; down this narrow valley rushes a torrent of water, and from the walls on

either side cascades bursting out from the rock came tumbling down for hundreds of feet into the densely wooded valley below.

In the pass itself the undergrowth was so thick that it was only with much difficulty that we could force a passage through it, and everywhere the way was blocked by huge trunks of fallen trees. As we got near the head of the gorge the timber became lighter; most of the trees being a species of mountain ash. In the afternoon of the same day we reached the summit of the Cordillera, and here all kinds of vegetation ceased, with the exception of short moss-like grass covering a soil composed of cinders and lava. The view from this ridge was magnificent. Snow drifts lay in every gully and ravine, to the east stretched the long grey massive line of granite rocks which forms the true Cordillera; this rose up abruptly from beds of forests on both the Argentine and Chilian sides; in the distance was Nahuel-Huapi, and in a corresponding position in Chile, the lake of Puyehüe; a little to the north the mountain of the same name; due west lay the Volcano of Llanquihue, and dotted about over both sides were other lakes and smaller sheets of water. The ridge I was on was the divide of the watershed, and from it the streams ran almost due east and west as far as my sight could carry.

For a few miles we continued along this summit crest, sometimes riding over snow, sometimes on ridges of pure cinders, until reaching the edge of the Chilian forest, and here I camped after a weary day's work. The morning

following every known form of climate presented itself; first a snowstorm; later this turned to sleet and rain accompanied with a bitterly cold wind; then hail for an hour; a thick fog came, succeeded, and, lastly, it settled down into a steady drenching downpour, which continued without ceasing for the following five days.

The day after passing the Cordillera was one of the worst of the trip. Some places I thought we should never get the horses up at all, and as it was, one of them, after an immense amount of trouble in getting to the top of the ridge, became frightened, lost his footing, and fell backwards, turning three complete sommersaults before he stopped; another horse fell and hurt himself so badly that I had to leave him. Poor brute, that night I saw the snow falling fast where he was, and wondered what his feelings must be. By mid-day most of our difficulties were overcome, and nothing but the heavy rain impeded our progress.

Descending the slopes on the Chile side we passed for some miles through open park-like country, and then struck the bed of a river of lava; this we followed for seven or eight miles, and then emerged once more into thick forest, but with a well-defined path through it. At eight o'clock on the evening of the sixth day we reached the first habitation in Chile. It consisted of nothing more than a very small hut built of logs, and inhabited by an Indian and his family, but it was a landmark that was very welcome to see. Lounging about the cleared space was an odd group of fourteen individuals. They were the remains of one of the tribes of Araucania. The central

figure was an old man shrivelled and meagre in appearance. He was the Chief. Tradition has handed down to these people that a valley exists in the Andes where there are plenty of cattle, game of all kinds, fowls, wheat, and vegetables growing wild and abundantly. This mythical land is called the "Pafu," and each year these people spend months travelling about the mountains vainly seeking this haven of promise. They were on one of these futile journeys when I met them, and appeared to be firmly convinced that one day they would find what they had so long and earnestly sought for.

XIV.

FROM THE CORDILLERA TO VALDIVIA.

THE track now passed through a succession of what might be termed small farms ; these consisted, as a rule, of a patch of potatoes, another of beans, and a few cows ; the latter being kept for the milk and the cheese that is one of the universal articles of consumption amongst the poorer classes in Chile. On the seventh day of my journey I met a German travelling along the road to Nahuel-Huapi. He had with him a hundred head of cattle, and said he was going to settle near the lake. I gave him what information I could about the way, and he said that he would cut a road through the forest to enable him to get his cattle over. Later on three other groups of persons were encountered on their way to the lake for the purpose of seeking land for settlement.

For two days we waded through rain and mud until reaching a place where are some natural hot springs, and these have been turned to account by a German, who has erected a small establishment for the benefit of persons coming to the baths for rheumatic affections. Some fifty Chilenos were at this establishment, and they asserted that the waters were most beneficial. The springs are hot cer-

tainly, but I do not think that they contain any mineral properties. I evaporated some of the water, and the only deposit left was a slight trace of carbonate of soda. These baths are often recommended by doctors to their patients. When in Ozorno I met a medical man who frequently prescribes a visit to them for various infirmities. In conversation I stated my opinion of the waters; his answer was that I was probably correct, but that the Chilenos so seldom wash themselves that he often recommends them to go to these springs as they would then bathe, and this would probably be an effectual remedy for their ills.

Instead of staying at these baths I pushed on for five miles more and reached the house of the father of one of my boys, situated at the point of Lake Puyehüe. I slept there that night and underwent an experience that merits description. The members of the family were Chilotes, that is, Indians from the island of Chiloe with a dash of Spanish blood in their veins; they consist of the two parents, six children, a married son and his wife, and their two children, and a boy who worked about the farm. Some eight acres of forest had been cleared; in the centre of this stood a house twenty feet square; two sides were formed of slabs of logs, the other two being roughly boarded; the frame was made of rough sticks squared off with an axe, the roof weather-boarded, the floor was the bare earth. In the middle of the hut burned a large fire, at which the family cooking was done; round this blazing mass of logs were stools hewn from logs of wood; in two corners were placed wooden boxes, these being the beds

for the smaller children. On one side was a shelf piled up with edibles and all sorts of refuse; scattered round the interior were all the worldly goods the family possessed, consisting of old saddles, skins, pots and pans, tubs for milk, and a varied assortment of odds and ends.

The family shared the house with a motley crew of dogs, cats, chickens, and pigs, all of these strongly resenting any attempt to put them out of doors. Strings stretched from side to side of the house acted as wardrobes, and from these were suspended various articles of wearing apparel. Mine host had pure Indian features, long hair hanging over his shoulders, and bare feet; on his head was a battered old felt hat, the remainder of his clothing consisting of a shirt and a pair of ragged trousers, to complete his attire a poncho covered the greater part of his body. His wife had long black hair, reaching down to her waist, and pleated into two pleats; a black cloth wrapper was worn round her shoulders, and another one of the same colour enveloped her body; in her ears were large flat silver ear-rings, two inches in diameter. The children were reproductions of the parents. These people were very poor, but kind and hospitable; when I arrived I was given a basket of white strawberries to eat whilst food was being prepared. This consisted of a *Cazuela*, a dish made by boiling a chicken in a large pot in which was also placed potatoes, garlic, other vegetables, and some salt. This I found to be the national dish in Chile. After feeding, everyone, including myself, laid down on the floor and went to sleep for the night, the fact that it

was pelting with rain outside largely helping me to overcome any scruples about being huddled up with curious company.

Since my experience of that family and the way they lived, I have been into many houses of the poorer Chilenos, and I have invariably found them of the same type. The lower classes are extremely poor, and rarely eat meat, which they look upon as a great luxury, but I have always been hospitably received by them, and, as a rule, found them happy and contented with their state of life.

From this place I journeyed round the lake of Puyehüe, and estimated it to be twenty-five miles long by fifteen miles wide. It is shut in by high hills, and at the eastern end is dotted over with islands. There is a waterfall close to it which was said to be very fine, but I confess to being disappointed in it. Before reaching the end of the lake all my horses, except two, gave out, and I was forced to leave them at farms on the road, and was compelled to hire two more animals to carry me to Ozorno. As far as Puyehüe, the vegetation was very similar to that on the Argentine slope of the Cordillera, with exception that I saw no cypress; but from here it began to change somewhat. Elms, which the natives call *roble*, properly meaning an oak, laurels, and a species of larch, were met with constantly in the forest. Large areas have been cleared to form paddocks for cattle, and in many of these clearings European grasses had been sown, and white clover was growing everywhere in profusion. At

the beginning of the lake the road passed through a district heavily stocked with cattle, and the forest was full of animals, feeding, apparently, chiefly on cane leaves and bushes. One of the principal productions of the district is cheese, which is made at every rancho, and amounts to a very considerable quantity in the course of the year.

I reached the town of Ozorno early on the 23rd instant, having been just ten days *en route* from the Rio Limay. The last fifteen miles before reaching the towns was through a wheat growing district, where well laid out farms looked smiling and prosperous, and signs of German industry were visible everywhere. Here the road was enclosed in by stout post and rail fences, and over these blackberry vines and rose bushes had entwined themselves, reminding me of the appearance of an English country lane. The land was undulating, and here and there patches of timber stood out in bold relief against the fields of wheat, then just beginning to turn to a bright golden colour. The homesteads were substantially constructed, generally of sawn timber with shingle roofs. The country, in fact, looked thoroughly populated, and contrasted strangely with the vast areas of land in Patagonia I had so recently passed over. The customs and habits of the people, too, are so totally different from those in vogue amongst the dwellers in the sister republic. Here a man has to work to exist, and as a not unnatural consequence, habits of thrift and economy have arisen to an extent that is absolutely foreign to Argentina. The manners of the people, also,

are quite of an opposite kind. I seldom passed a Chilian peasant in the road who did not touch his cap and salute me in a respectful manner, and not one in ten would pass without giving the usual salutation of "*adios señor.*" The natives are of a frugal, hard working character, and in many ways are imitating the excellent example set them by the German colonists.

One thing particularly struck me as I drew near to Ozorno; it was the number of people trudging along on foot. In Argentina I have travelled for weeks and not seen a single person on the road who was not on horse back. For some three miles before reaching the town I met long strings of carts; these were of a primitive sort, to say the least of them. The wheels were solid blocks of wood cut out of large trees, wooden axles ran through them, and on these were laid two beams, and then a slight framework was built on the top. The motive power was two bullocks, and the yoke was lashed on to their horns. Their progress was marked by the ear splitting, creaking of the clumsy wheels, whilst the drivers calmly slumbered on the tops of the loads. I found the town of Ozorno was chiefly inhabited by Germans. In fact they have the whole trade of the district entirely in their hands, and own the bulk of the surrounding property. German is so universally spoken that many of the inhabitants could talk no other language, and could only barely understand a few of the commonest Spanish words. At the hotel I stayed at there were nine other guests, and all were Germans. Ozorno is principally concerned with the ex-

portion of wheat and farm produce. It is situated at the junction of the Ríos Dumas and Rahue, and by means of small steamers sends most of its cargo to Valdivia. There are a few tanneries and breweries, but the beer brewed at the latter establishments is of very poor quality. The population is three thousand five hundred souls, and amongst these is only one Englishman, a Mr. Adams, who combines the dual functions of Medical man and Photographer to the community.

If a comparison is made between this district and any similarly situated one in Argentina, there can be only one conclusion arrived at, and it is that Chile is quite a century in advance of Argentina as regards progress of civilization and development.

At Ozorno I enjoyed the luxury of taking off my clothes and going to bed like a Christian, a comfort I had not been able to indulge in since the 28th of November of the previous year. With regard to my trip across the Andes, I feel much like the Yankee who tried going down a toboggan slide for the first time. On reaching the bottom he made the statement that he would not have missed the experience for a hundred dollars, but, when urged to repeat it, he said he would not undergo it again for a thousand.

After a delay of a day to arrange for fresh horses, I resumed my journey towards Valdivia. Starting at mid-day on January 25th, I travelled along the high road, through a country where every yard of the land was cultivated. It was a charming landscape to look at; wheat is the principal crop but every class of cereal is

represented. Round each homestead are gardens and fruit orchards. The district through which I passed lay in an undulating valley, and here and there clumps of trees had been left, either accidentally or on purpose, and served to save the view from anything approaching monotony. Twenty-five miles from Ozorno I crossed the Rio Bueno by a ferry, and ten miles farther on reached the town of La Union, another settlement which the Germans have monopolised. The population is two thousand. It is simply a small agricultural centre for the surrounding farmers, and from here they despatch their produce to the coast by way of the Rio Bueno.

The hotel at La Union, where I proposed to stay for the night was shut up ; enquiry elicited the information that a death had that day occurred in the house, and that according to Chilian custom it would not open its doors to receive visitors until the following morning. I had therefore to continue my journey for another thirty-five miles to a third German settlement, called Los Olmos. The first ten miles of the road continued to pass through farms, and then the soil became a red clay and very poor in quality. Here the forest had been left, and no cultivation attempted, the owners of the land utilizing it for breeding cattle only. A long dreary ride over a bad road and hilly country brought me to my destination, at ten o'clock at night. A small area in the neighbourhood is under cultivation, but the principal industry is raising cattle and growing hay for the Valdivian market. It is only a village of not more than two hundred houses, and is not of any great

importance. I stayed at the house of a German who had been in the gold rush to California in '49. He entertained me until the small hours with stories of his experiences there.

A thirty mile ride from Los Olmos took me into Valdivia. The route was devoid of any particular interest, and for the most part the way lay through a swamp ; over this a road had been constructed with wooden piles and layers of earth. It was not until within a few miles of Valdivia that any signs of farming appeared, and then not to any large extent. I reached my journey's end early on the 26th of January, and once more laid my poncho aside and donned the garb of civilization.

I found the population of the town to be some ten thousand souls. It is prettily situated at the confluence of a network of small rivers and streams, which empty themselves into what is known as the Rio Valdivia, a short way above the town. For a place of its size it is well provided with manufactories and industries. The principal of these are tanneries, distilleries, breweries, and shoe factories ; indeed Valdivia provides the greater portion of Chile with these products. Some fifteen miles from the town is the port of Corral, and here all the principal lines of ocean-going steamers trading with Chile call.

XV.

SOUTHERN CHILE.

THE Southern portion of Chile is, undoubtedly, destined to play a very important *rôle* in the future destinies of the country. Up till the present it has been passing through a stage of evolution, which, notwithstanding the fact that it has attracted comparatively little attention from the outside world, will very shortly begin to make its influence felt, and will prove to be a factor of the utmost importance as regards the welfare of both internal and external affairs of the Republic.

A very cursory glance will show that the stage of development to which these districts of the south have already attained has not been arrived at without the expenditure of a vast amount of energy, labour, and downright hard work. The map shows this part of Chile to be one long stretch of mountainous land gradually rising from the seaboard to the highest peaks of the Cordillera of the Andes, the most elevated points of which form the boundary with Argentina. Fifty years ago the whole of this tract of country was a dense forest. The only inhabitants were the dwellers in the few isolated settlements established by the Spaniards along the sea-

coast or on such rivers as are navigable and the Indian population. To-day, the forest is everywhere giving place to cultivation, or being fenced for cattle raising, and large supplies of wheat, other agricultural produce, live stock, hides, and many other articles are annually exported. In place of small settlements, thriving towns exist; and a sturdy population of farmers is rapidly spreading over the whole of these southern districts.

This transformation has been effected in the face of many very great obstacles and natural difficulties. To hew a farm out of the heavy forest needed such qualities as endurance, perseverance, and unremitting toil. But the fact that success demanded the exercise of these qualities brought about the development of other traits of character. What required so much labour to obtain was not to be lightly disposed of, and hence arose the habits of thrift and economy that is such a very marked feature in the routine of life followed in the south. Moreover, a dislike of being in debt may be looked upon as a national characteristic, and in this the people of Chile differ materially from most other South Americans.

It is not to be supposed, however, the existence of these qualities, which have, so to speak, turned this part of Chile from a wilderness into a garden, were the spontaneous outcome of a mixture of Spanish blood with that of the indigenous Indian. Such is not the case. In reality it is due to foreign influence, aided by the naturally fostering conditions of life and climate. This outside pressure, so beneficially brought to bear, is entirely

German, and to that nationality belongs exclusively the credit of having created a substantially solid state of prosperity in these southern districts.

In the year 1845, the first German colony was established at Valdivia, under the guidance of Herr Anwandter. Gradually the settlement was extended until, to-day, Southern Chile is not only chiefly owned by the German element, but in a large section of it the language, manners, and customs of Germany predominate absolutely. The range of country to be classified as being purely subordinate to German influence is the whole of the districts lying between the town of Concepcion, in latitude 37 degrees south, and Port Montt, in latitude 42 degrees south, and this area is equal to nearly a quarter of all Chile.

It is from the immigration that began fifty-seven years ago that a new race of Chilians is steadily rising up: they are rapidly becoming more important as regards wealth, and every day their moral weight assumes greater proportions. I have heard it urged, in disparagement of this section of the community, that they estrange themselves from the remainder of Chile by adhering to the customs of their forefathers in place of adopting those of the country they are living in. This argument is a sophistical one. My own experience has shown me that whilst German habits and manners may be retained, this new Chilian race entertains very strong feelings for the land of its adoption and birth, and would struggle hard in defence of the homes formed, and the wealth created.

In the late civil war were many examples of sacrifices made, on behalf of what was considered a just cause, by men who cared absolutely nothing for individual place or political power.

One of the most remarkable facts in connection with the south is the thoroughly practical organization of a school system initiated by German influence, and entirely conducted under German supervision. These institutions are free from all control of the State, and the instruction given at them is based on thoroughly sound and approved European methods. The result is that not only are the children of Germans and other foreigners sent to them to be educated, but advantage is also taken of them by many old Spanish Chilian families. Thus, more or less, an uniform spirit is being established throughout the south, and the younger generation now profiting by it will feel the benefit of such a system in a very few years. There are schools in full work at Valdivia, Concepcion, Victoria, Traiguen, Ozorno, and Port Montt, and, indeed, in every small town where German influence preponderates. I visited several of them, and was specially struck by the manner in which the one at Valdivia was carried on.

I came in personal contact with an example of how very Chilian the younger generation is prone to be: this was in the person of a young doctor, resident in Valdivia. In conversation with him I asked what his nationality was; his answer was that he was a native. When I pointed out that his features and general appearance were

far more like a foreigner, his words to me were: "*Soy de la nueva raza de Chile.*" This answer exhibits a spirit of patriotism that can only prove of advantage to Chile in the future, and this same feeling is very widely spread throughout the country.

The general opinion expressed amongst these people with regard to the recent civil war was that it was inevitable. For several years past, in fact from the time of the war with Peru, the Government had been drifting into a method of administering the public revenue in a manner only to be characterised as needlessly extravagant. The course entered upon was similar to that which has brought the Argentine into its present state of financial distress. In the south I repeatedly heard the opinion expressed that at any cost this had to be stopped. The victory of the Congress Party succeeded in doing this, and, at all events for the time, no inclination will be shown by the authorities to again abuse their trusts. It was often said during the war that the south sympathized with the Balmaceda section. This, however, was not the case amongst the people who really govern public opinion in that part of the country. Again with regard to the question that arose with the United States, the views I heard expressed on the subject in the south were both shrewd and patriotic. Looking at the affair in a broad sense, it was considered unjust that a great and powerful country should demand a heavy indemnity from a small and weak one on account of a fancied wrong arising from what was nothing more or

less than a street brawl. It is clearly recognized that if war had occurred Chile would eventually have been worsted; but, on the other hand, the great majority of the inhabitants would willingly aid in defending their country against any attempt at invasion.

Before leaving this subject of the new race now establishing itself, I must recount the pith of a conversation with a Spanish Chilian in regard to the new order of things. We had been discussing the effect of German colonisation and he had expressed somewhat disparaging views as to the rapid spread of the influence exercised by that nationality. At length he had to admit that so far as successful results being obtained from persevering hard work were concerned, the Germans and their descendants were *facile principes* amongst the people living to-day in Chile; but he qualified this admission by saying, "After all, what is their life? It is work always: their one desire to amass money. They have no amusements of any kind. Here in Valdivia, which is called the capital of the south, there is not a theatre or a *café*. The sole diversion these Germans have is to swill beer, and they fill up their whole leisure time in that way; it is a life that is *triste* in the extreme." I cannot help admitting that my friend's remarks contained much truth in them, but I think they were prompted by somewhat jealous feelings, as, indeed, it is only natural they should be.

The material progress made of late years in the southern part of the Republic has been remarkable, and

it continues steadily advancing, notwithstanding the severe check the whole development of the country received from the events that occurred in connection with the Civil War of 1891; but this produced less disastrous effects in the south than elsewhere.

In the country districts the staple products are wheat and cattle. In both cases the industries are in a thriving condition, and everywhere the area of forest land being cleared and ploughed up for agriculture is increasing, while the extent now enclosed for cattle-breeding purposes stretches, in many places, up to the Cordillera of the Andes. So much is this the case that many of the owners of live stock are seriously considering the advisability of taking up blocks of land in Patagonia on which to graze their surplus flocks and herds.

The prosperity attending agricultural and pastoral pursuits supplied the material for the production of certain kinds of manufactures, and led to the establishment of a large number of factories for tanning, distilling, leather and shoemaking, and brewing. These are distributed over all the southern districts, but the most important centre for them is Valdivia. The output is consumed in the North of Chile, and the trade extends to Peru and Bolivia. At present these markets are sufficient to absorb the whole of the production of manufactured goods, but there is no reason to suppose that it may not increase largely in the future, and allow of exportation to other countries.

Another important factor in the wealth of the south

is the existence of immense deposits of coal. Large fields exist in the neighbourhood of Coronel, Lota, and Lebu; since the war with Peru, this branch of mining industry has been carried on with great activity, and it annually increases in importance. The coal is of fair quality, though the formation is somewhat new, and, in consequence, is of the character known as "dirty," probably, however, it will improve as the leads get down to a deeper level.

The natural advantages enjoyed by Chile with regard to easy means of transport are very great. The long stretch of sea-board enables all produce, once on the coast, to be cheaply and easily placed in the market for sale. This facility is greatly augmented in the south by the number of navigable rivers which form a network of waterways throughout the country. They require, however, the assistance of a well regulated system of properly constructed roads to allow them to be utilised to their full value. In this matter Chile is very far behindhand. There are roads, of course; but whether it is owing to the mountainous nature of the country, or to the apathy of the Government, the fact remains that the highways through the country districts are nothing more than tracks, and they run up and down ridges of hills at gradients that render it impossible to work with heavily loaded carts. The result of this is that the whole of the road transport is effected with wretched little cars, each drawn by a pair of bullocks. The expense of wasted time and labour in adhering to such a system is enormous,

and it is one of the greatest drawbacks to agriculture in Chile at the present time.

Meanwhile, the Government, instead of looking into and endeavouring to remedy this question of the roads, is throwing a sop to Cerberus by extending its system of State railways to the far south. This, no doubt, is a very excellent thing to do, but, when the mountainous formation of the country is clearly understood, it will be seen that a railway can only give access to a very limited area of territory unless roads also exist; moreover, a railway cannot pay if there is no cargo for it to carry, and it must, therefore, be run at a loss in this particular case until roads are made to act as feeders to it. One other fact remains in connection with the extending of the railway system to leave it a doubtful question as to whether the Government is wise in pushing forward the extension. During the rule of Balmaceda, certain sums of money were obtained for the express purpose of carrying out this work; in the time of the Civil War this money was spent in maintaining warlike operations, and, consequently, to resume the work on the railway means that the country must incur a further sum of indebtedness. At present the system is open as far south as Victoria and Traiguen respectively, and from the latter place the construction is being proceeded with to Valdivia, and thence to La Union, Ozorno, and to Port Montt.

Another public work projected is the dredging of the Rio Valdivia. The object is to allow all ocean-going

steamers to come up to the town instead of remaining at Corral. Such a work, however, is not by any means an absolute necessity, and it would seem to be quite unjustifiable to incur the expense of such a costly undertaking, at all events at the present juncture. Corral, which now serves as the port of Valdivia, is only six miles distant from the city it serves, and the only saving obtained by dredging the river would be the cost of six miles of lighterage and transhipment. Corral is an interesting little place on account of the remains of extensive old Spanish fortifications, and the grim battlements of one of the largest of these frown down on the visitor as he approaches the town.

Of private enterprises in the south, one in which a large sum of English capital is invested is the Arauco Railway and Coal Mining Company. The Company was formed for the purpose of working certain coal fields in the district of Arauco and to build a railway of 68 kilometres in length, this passing along the coast and through the ports of Lota and Coronel, and thence to Concepcion. The line has a Government guarantee, and on that the shareholders are dependent for any interest on their capital, the railway, so far, having been run at a loss. This appears to be owing to the fact that, whilst the railway passes through a country that is rich in coal for the entire length of the line, the policy of the Company has been to throw every obstacle in the way of fresh mines being opened. The only reasonable explanation for this course of action is the fear that

competition in the production of coal would result, and that then the price of coal, now between ten and twelve dollars per ton, could not be maintained. As regards the mining part of the venture, that, too, appears to be in an unsatisfactory state. The result of enquiries in the neighbourhood indicated that good and extensive fields of coal most certainly exist on the property. The output, however, has been most disappointing, and quite at variance with the promises held out in the prospectus issued when the Company was floated in London.

From Concepcion I travelled north to Santiago by the State railway. It is a journey occupying eleven hours by the express train, the average speed attained being thirty-two miles an hour. During the entire distance the railway passed through a well populated country, the land being cut up into small farms. These are devoted to mixed farming, and produce cereals, cattle, vines, and, indeed, every sort of European agricultural and pastoral products. They appeared to be well cultivated and very flourishing, and with a general appearance of wealth and sound prosperity.

There is a very European look about this section of the country, and, moreover, all the available land suitable for agricultural purposes is, apparently, being utilised.

A curious account was related to me by a friend who was an eye witness of what occurred when the Congressional troops entered Santiago after the victories of Concon and Placilla. The mob assembled in the streets was led by three men on horseback; these held

in their hands written lists of the names of prominent supporters of Balmaceda. The mob molested nobody in the streets, but quietly followed the horsemen. These stopped at various houses that were noted on the lists, and gave orders for the mob to begin work. Not a vestige of anything but the bare walls was left of the marked houses. Windows and doors were torn down, and all inside fittings thrown out into the street. In this manner a great amount of valuable property was destroyed.

XVI.

URUGUAY.

THE little Republic of Uruguay, or La Banda Oriental as it is generally called, differs very widely from her bigger sister across the River Plate. A few years ago Montevideo was the recognised resort for the dwellers in Buenos Aires during the hot summer months. The attractions were better air and a cooler atmosphere, good reasons in themselves, the more cogent one being, probably, that fashion set the example of an annual migration when the sultry weather arrived. To-day the glories of Montevideo as a watering-place have departed, and visitors are few and far between. Partly this is due to the Argentine Brighton at Mar del Plata having sprung into existence, and partly because depreciated paper incomes cannot afford to buy gold to pay the necessary cost of living for three months in the Uruguayan capital.

Looking at Montevideo from the open roadstead that does duty for a harbour, the first object that catches the eye is the mount to the left of the town. It was from here the revolutionists carried on the strife during the

long seven years of civil war. They entrenched themselves on the hill, and no efforts could dislodge them. Perseverance rewarded them, and eventually they won the day. The city rises somewhat abruptly from the water's edge, and is laid out with the streets parallel to one another as is customary in nearly all Spanish-American towns. According to the latest statistics, Montevideo contains a population of 170,000 inhabitants out of a total of 680,000 in the Republic. This large proportion living in the city is illustrative of the gregarious tendency of the Uruguayans, and is a most marked national characteristic feature.

Close by the landing-stage is a huge and pretentious-looking building, still lacking many finishing touches. It was destined to be the Grand Hotel, and the idea was conceived and executed during the "boom." But the crash came before the building opened for the benefit of the public, and for the past two years it has remained in the custody of a caretaker. Hotels in Montevideo are expensive and exceedingly bad; they are run on the American system of a fixed charge for the day, and this includes the usual meals of breakfast and dinner.

One is struck by the cleanly appearance of the streets but in nearly every block of houses the Nemesis of wild speculation is apparent. Half-finished buildings and empty sites are met with on all sides; in most cases these have some connection with the Compañia de Obras Publicas, which was the foundation of most of the wild-cat schemes of 1888 and the succeeding years. A most

trenchant example of the methods of that era is found in the *barrière Reus*. A site was chosen three miles from Montevideo, on which it was determined to build a town. Forty acres of land was plotted out, and covered with blocks of houses. The masonry work was finished, and all that was wanting to finally complete the undertaking was the fitting of windows and doors to the buildings. The end of the "boom" came, however, before this could be accomplished, and the town remains to-day in a semi-finished state as a monument of egregious folly.

Montevideo does not shine with architectural beauty; indeed, there is hardly a building worthy of notice, although costly edifices are not wanting, and of these the Uruguayan Club is an example. This is situated in the principal plaza, and the entire front of it is built of marble imported from Italy. In direct contrast to this useless extravagance is the cosy little English club directly opposite, and whence hospitality is ungrudgingly extended to English-speaking visitors.

At every few yards in the streets one is accosted by sellers of lottery tickets. The drawings for the prizes take place three and four times each month, and the enterprise receives warm support, both locally and in Buenos Aires. Nor is this form of gambling an unmixed evil. Twenty per cent. of the proceeds are devoted to charitable purposes, and sufficient funds are obtained from this source to support an admirably conducted hospital, a lunatic asylum, almhouses for aged poor, and a species of kindergarten, where labouring people can leave their

children during work hours and be sure that they will be well cared for.

Montevideo is famed for its handsome women-folk. The reputation is fully borne out by facts. Few cities can boast of so many pleasant-featured, well set-up specimens as are met with in every day life in the capital of Uruguay. Their clear complexions and bright eyes testify to the healthy climate they live in, and the numbers of rosy-cheeked children are further evidence of the salubrious nature of the surroundings. The climate is, indeed, as good as can be wished for, and it has the advantage over Buenos Aires in that it is far more bracing. In the summer months there is nearly always a fresh breeze blowing up from the sea to temper the intense heat of the sun.

On the outskirts of the city are clusters of villas and *quintas* with tastefully planted gardens: these are, as a rule, the residences of foreigners who form the chief section of the business community. About a mile from the town is the Prado, a public park laid out with many thousands of eucalypti and other trees; in summer time all the beauty and fashion of Montevideo betakes itself to this spot and the principal drives and walks are made cheerful by bright costumes and pretty faces.

To the world in general Uruguay is principally known for two products—Liebig's extract of meat and Paysandu ox tongues—both exceedingly excellent in many ways. The famous establishment of the Liebig Company is on the river Uruguay at Fray Bentos, a few miles above the

confluence with the Rio de La Plata. Last year the number of cattle killed for the factory was 265,000 and the meat was exported to Europe in the form of extract and other products. The tongue curing establishment at Paysandu, also on the river Uruguay, is of smaller proportions, but the output is steadily increasing. Several other competing factories, however, exist for producing this class of canned goods and the enterprise has to fight hard to maintain the position of supremacy it now holds in South America.

The railway system of Uruguay has made great advances of late years. Nearly one thousand miles are open for traffic, more than half of this belonging to the central of Uruguay. The main lines are from Montevideo to Paysandu, thence to the town of Salto and from there connecting with the Brazilian frontier at the river Quareim and at the settlement of San Eugenio. A branch of the central of Uruguay also taps Brazil at the border town of Rivera. Many other lines were projected and guaranteed by the Government during the "boom." The crisis, however, came before several of these projects advanced beyond the initial stage of drawing up plans. As it is the length of railway open is beyond the capacity of the country to support in a satisfactory and profitable manner.

Of the political organization and methods dominant in the Republic little need be said. Every native of Uruguay would like to hold a political appointment and would not hesitate to make use of any means to obtain

one. At present the Army practically holds the balance of power in its hands and intends to continue doing so in the future. The reigning President, Dr. Herrera y Obes, is not popular—but then he has an empty Treasury to deal with and no plums to give away. The presidential term is for four years and the next election takes place in 1894.

Financially the state of Uruguay is not a happy one. To meet the charges on the Government obligations and to provide sufficient for the administration expenses necessitates the burden of heavy taxation, thus making the cost of living excessively high. It is difficult to see how this evil can be remedied. The "boom" passed away and left the country suffering from a severe money crisis and there is very little recuperative power in the Republic to enable it to bring about any speedy re-habilitation.

The service on the debt is unavoidable; the money was obtained and has to be paid for, though by the reduction in the rate of interest a considerable saving in the amount results. What weighs the country down is (1) the Pension List, and (2) the Army. The former represents a tax of about nine shillings per head of the population, the latter over twelve shillings per head. As a matter of fact, the Army rules the Government, and any project to sensibly reduce the effective numbers would turn out any President or Minister who attempted it. Nevertheless, it seems an anomaly that a reduction in the rate of interest of the Foreign Debt should have

been asked for when such an enormous expense, almost totally unnecessary, is tolerated. A certain force, no doubt, is essential to maintain order throughout the country; but this might be accomplished at a very much smaller cost than the present, and a very great saving effected both in that Department and the Pension Fund.

To raise further revenue by extra taxation is practically impossible. If the Estimates could be realised they would give about £4 18s. per head of population; of this, the Customs represent £3 3s., and direct taxes, £1 7s., all other sources of revenue only accounting for 10s. There are no reproductive works owned by the State, nor does it possess any lands to dispose of by sale or lease. To further raise the tariff on exports and imports would cause a complete stoppage of all trade, and would prove an absolute preventive to any reaction from the present state of depression. Such a policy could only be characterised as suicidal, and would meet with the very strongest opposition from the whole commercial community in Montevideo. For the present, therefore, it is not so much a question for the Government of the Banda Oriental to think of raising more revenue as it is to consider how best it can reduce expenses.

It is to the gradual growth of the internal resources that the Uruguayans must look for increased wealth. The country contains 46,830,000 acres, and this is utilised for stock breeding. A careful estimate of the

live stock gives as the actual number to-day:—Cattle, 6,000,000; sheep, 13,500,000; horses, 350,000.

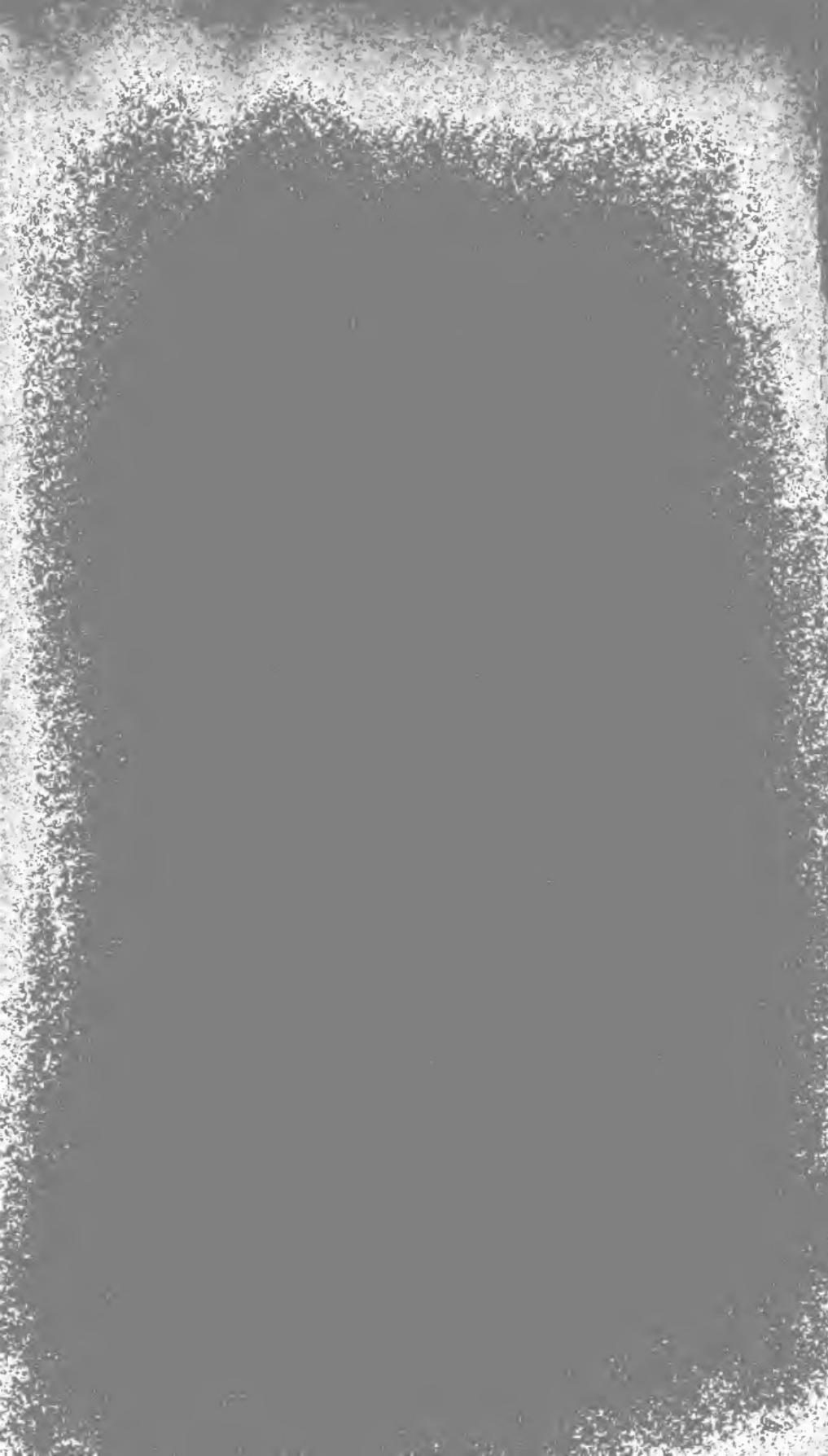
The land is only of value for pastoral purposes over the great majority of the Republic. Here and there agriculture has been attempted, but has never been attended with any encouraging degree of success. As a rule, the nature of the country is hilly, with loose stone and rock cropping on the surface, and with a depth of soil that offers no glowing prospect to the would-be agriculturist. It is not even as though vast tracts of unpopulated districts afforded greater facilities for immigration. Quite the reverse is actually the case. Every acre of land in the Banda Oriental is owned by private individuals, with the exception of the very small areas that it has been found absolutely necessary to reserve for public use. There is no possibility of rapid expansion. The country is as far developed as it is possible for it to become until the natural law of an increased population forces the inhabitants to work harder and produce more for the necessary sustenance of life—or starve. Even for pastoral purposes the land compares very unfavourably with that in Argentina, and cannot carry nearly so many head of stock to the acre.

Turning to other and more local subjects, the burning question of the day is the agitation for reducing the taxable value of property. The proprietors complain of the unjust values that have been placed upon their properties, and they state that the prices on which they

are now forced to pay taxes are the unnaturally inflated ones of the time of the "boom," whereas they show in their petition upon the subject that the actual value, which should be the rateable one for all public taxation, is less than half what it was three years ago. In all probability the Government will be forced to take notice of the remonstrances on the subject that have been forwarded, and make an all-round reduction in rateable value.

Montevideo to-day bears a very poverty-stricken appearance. And this is only natural, when the manner in which it was over-built and over-exploited generally in the years of 1888-9 is considered. The residents, whether foreigners or natives, have no doubt suffered, and in many cases sustained severe losses, but the wealth they even now talk of as having been in their possession was of a somewhat chimerical character. Shares bought at cheap rates in bubble Companies were at two or three hundred per cent. premium; land acquired by inheritance or former purchase was spoken of as being worth so much, but in reality, very little solid wealth was found. Credit was unlimited, and the possessors of these Shares or lands lived on the overdrafts given by the banks, whilst to-day they have to return to the state of life they enjoyed ten years ago, and think themselves hardly used by being forced to do so.







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